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In This Issue

Departments

Here I Sit

by Shirley Morgenthaler

A Potpourri of Perspectives on Learning and Teaching

In our last issue we focused on one topic from a variety of perspectives. In this issue we do the same, but our focus comes through the variety of topics, issues, and recommendations, all of them built around learning and teaching.

Learning and teaching are the least common denominator of our work and of our ministry. That learning and teaching may take place in a College of Business, such as Wanda Foster's focus on teaching ethics to business students in a faith-based university. Does that faith base make a difference? Do business students studying at a faith-based university such as ours have an advantage in the business world for which they are preparing?

What impact does effective mentoring have on learning and teaching? Rebecca Stanton and Ann McKellar look at mentoring about-to-be teachers and first-year teachers. They propose that all mentoring include communication, modeling, and reflection. Ask yourself whether this perspective can make an impact on your professional practice, whether that be teaching, business, theater, church ministry, or any of a myriad professional applications.

Taking mentoring to a more specific level, Mary Zaharis discusses first-year teacher induction and multi-year mentoring. While her discussion is specific to education, it can be applied to a variety of fields. Consider whether your area of enterprise could benefit from Mary's work.

Sandra Doering takes us on a different journey. Her study of Louisa May Alcott has begun with the discovery that *Little Women* was published in 1868, a mere four years after CUC was founded as Addison Lutheran Teacher's Seminary. As amazing as the beginning of CUC is during the Civil War, Louisa May Alcott's work may need to be considered as more amazing. Here is a woman, publishing under her real name, writing about four young women. Who would do that? Read Sandy's article and find out.

Our next set of articles explore aspects of literacy and literacy development. Lauren Wellen and Edgar Ramos discuss the use of graphic novels to teach literacy. In my mind, the most amazing detail in that article is the revelation that Edgar Ramos has gone from being a struggling reader, a non-reader, a repeater of second grade to now being a member of the CUC faculty with a PsyD in counseling psychology! Jenna Nelson takes us into another area of literacy, that of the adolescent learner. She reminds us how critical it is to attend to the needs of teen learners as they deepen their understandings of, and skill in, reading and writing.

Finally, Art Safer, Mary Zaharis, Denise Glascow, Susan Mann, and Michele Gnan have collaborated on the issue of community engagement for families who are nurturing a child diagnosed with autism spectrum. Their discussion and recommendations for heightened community engagement with those children and their families gives us points to ponder for our respective communities.

In her *Ministry in the Classroom* column, Kimberly Lavado discusses the need for all of us at Concordia University Chicago to be sensitive and responsive to the diversity in all of our classrooms. That diversity is often less visible than we can ascertain without careful analysis and interactions. Her column can give you criteria with which you can rate your own sensitivity to diversity.

Donna Knight gives us a thoughtful review of Tienkin's *Defying Standardization.* I strongly suggest that you read both this review and the book it reviews. The standardization of the curriculum of schooling through national and state standards is a concern on the part of both leaders and teachers in our schools.

Amy Stradtmann gives us *Words for Thought* about our attention to what she calls "the easy stuff." Her words give us thoughts on which to ponder and to use for a personal assessment. The easy stuff is easy to ignore.

Erik Ankerberg serves as our interim president for this issue because it is still a part of Volume 155. We appreciate his willingness to serve in this capacity during the hyphen between Dr. Gard and Dr. Dawn. It is a great professional dance to stand on that hyphen and keep CUC in working order. His hyphen dance has included the leadership of this journal and writing this *Last Word* column for us. Thank you, Erik. ***LEJ***

Can Faith-Based Education Impact Ethical Behavior?

By Wanda K. Foster

Introduction

The Hebrew root word for justice means "straightness." Biblical justice is the moral and ethical standard by which God measures human conduct (Harnish, 1991). This standard is entrenched in the culture of faith-based education but does it make a difference in our behavior? Research has verified that ethics can be learned (Cloninger & Selvarajan, 2010; Marnburg, 2003; Neubaum, Pagell, Drexler, McKee-Ryan, & Larson, 2009; Nguyen, Basuray, Smith, Kopka & McCulloh, 2008). Although teaching ethical theory is the foundation for a lasting understanding of ethics, scholars agree that teaching ethical theory is not sufficient to promote ethical behavior (Bowden & Smythe, 2008; Hanson & Moore, 2014; Marnburg, 2003). The problem with teaching ethical norms is that this learning must be translated into moral action (Sekerka & Bagozzi, 2007; Gunia, Wang, L., Huang, Wang, J. & Murnighan, 2012). There is a disconnection between "knowing" versus "doing" what is right. The remainder of this article will explore the behavioral changes in an undergraduate business ethics course at a faith-based university.

Research Study on Moral Action

Teaching ethical theory is the foundation for a lasting understanding of ethics, but scholars agree that teaching ethical theory is not sufficient to promote ethical behavior (Bowden & Smythe, 2008; Hanson & Moore, 2014; Marnburg, 2003). If teaching theory is not enough, then different ways must be investigated to improve ethical learning. Consider the biblical teaching from the book of Amos, around 750 BC. "This is what he showed me: behold, the Lord was standing beside a wall built with a plumb line, with a plumb line in his hand. And the LORD said to me, 'Amos, what do you see?' And I said, 'A plumb line.'" (Bible Gateway, Amos 7: 7-8a, 2019). Amos was learning moral behavior, not by theories, but instead by visualization. The visual representation of a plumb line was used to signify that straightness is essential for moral

conduct. This is an early example of experiential teaching for learning ethics. It has been well documented that experiential learning can be used to bridge formal learning to practical application of that learning. Active and engaged teaching methods impact learning more effectively than passive methods for complex issues (Lavine & Roussin, 2012). Experiential exercises give students a practical, first-hand experience with ethical dilemmas and allow the students to explore and reflect on their own feelings and attitudes (McWilliams & Nahavandi, 2006). Examples of experiential methods used in the business ethics classroom include: case methods, interactive dialog and discussions, field experience, business games/simulations, debates, visualizations, role plays, and reflection. This study compared experiential or "active-learning" methods to that of a traditional classroom to investigate the impact these methods have on ethical behavior.

Ethical learning can be defined as an ongoing process, which requires raising ethical sensitivity and upholding moral values by intention and behavior to promote ethical decision-making (Nguyen et al., 2008). A second consideration for this study is how to measure ethical learning. The measurement of ethical behavior in past studies has been based on ethical intention. Ethical judgment and moral intention have been shown lacking as an accurate predictor for ethical behavior and moral action (Rest, 1986). Because of the disconnection between reasoning and behavior, Marnburg (2003) challenged educators to investigate teaching business ethics to promote moral action. This study was designed to measure actual behavior rather than the intention to act in order to better explore changes in behavior resulting from a business-ethics course.

Study Construct

The purpose for this research study was to investigate the effects of experiential learning on undergraduate student behavior after taking a business ethics course compared to that of students taking the same course taught with traditional theories and methods. The research question asked was: "Does teaching business ethics with the use of experiential methods affect moral action?". The hypothesis resulting from this question was based on findings from McWilliams and Nahavandi (2006) that indicated experiential methods were superior pedagogies for teaching ethics. H_1 stated that participants taking a business ethics course based on traditional methods, TM1, would demonstrate significantly less improvement in moral action than participants engaged in experiential learning, TM2. To measure moral action rather than the intent to act, this study tested the hypothesis with a decision-making game based on Gneezy's (2005) deception game.

The study was conducted at Saint Xavier University, a faith-based university in Chicago, and included students enrolled in an undergraduate sixteen-week business ethics course. Saint Xavier is one of the top five percent of business programs globally and among the top fifteen most innovative small college business programs in the United States (Graham School of Management, 2018). Two classrooms of business ethics were used in this study. Each classroom had approximately twenty-eight students participating in the study. The students had no knowledge of the different teaching methods that were to be used when they registered for the course. The students self-selected into one or the other classroom based on their particular schedules and without previous knowledge of the study. No stratification was done on the sample. Although this study sample was representative of the larger population, it is considered a non-probability sample because the students were pre-assigned and chosen based on their availability and convenience for taking the course. The random assignment of students into two groups would be disruptive to classroom learning. This study is classified as quasi-experimental (Creswell, 2012).

This quasi-experimental study utilized a pretest-posttest design. Independent variables were the teaching methods used in the classroom. The control group, TM1, was the classroom which learned ethics through traditional methods; readings, lecture, class discussion, assignments and exams.

The other classroom, TM2, learned ethics with the same text, materials, and instructor, but the assignments were based on experiential methods. TM2 was rooted in experiential learning, which is defined as learning from experience (Lewis & Williams, 1994). Reflection is encouraged as experience is gained to develop new attitudes and ways to think. The action-oriented methods used in this study emphasized individual and group exercises, which required that participants take an action based on ethical decision-making with a reflective component (Chapman et al., 1995). Experiential learning, TM2, was the second independent variable and served as an intervention or treatment variable for the study.

The dependent variable in this study was the outcome, moral action. Moral action was measured as an outcome for both groups with pretest and posttest exercises based on variations of Gneezy's (2005) "deception game." The "deception game" required the participants to take an action rather than to give their intention of what they would do in a particular situation. The actions taken by participants in the game revealed moral behavior. The pretest was conducted at the outset of the study. The posttest was administered at the end of the sixteen-week study. The results from TM1 and TM2 participants were compared for significant differences to provide evidence about moral behavior.

Data from the comparison of the two groups pretest and posttest were used to provide understanding for translating ethical learning into moral action.

A moderating variable, moral development, could mislead the understanding of the dependent variable, moral action. Because students entering a business ethics course may vary in their moral development, a reference point was needed to compare the two groups. The DIT-2 (Rest et al., 1999) was given to both groups. TM1 and TM2 were compared for significant differences in moral development. A demographic survey was also utilized to compare both groups for variables which could impact moral behavior: age, gender, credit hours earned, grade point average, type of business major declared, and faith background. The demographic survey and the DIT-2 were administrated early in the course.

Instrumentation

Instrumentation for this research study included: a demographic survey, the Defining Issues Test, Version 2, DIT-2 (Rest et al., 1999), and a pretest and posttest exercise based on Gneezy's (2005) "deception game." The demographic survey and the DIT-2 were administered at the beginning of the sixteen-week course. The "game" was conducted twice; at the beginning and at the end of the course.

The purpose for the demographic survey was to gain information about the study sample. The DIT-2 provided a baseline measurement to assess the moral maturity of the participants from the two groups tested. The pretest and posttest assessments measured moral action. Lying, cheating, and deception are considered immoral behaviors (Brown, Miller, & DeTienne, 2014). The principle behind Gneezy's (2005) "deception game" was to identify the participants' behavior as either truthful or deceptive. The "deception game" was labeled, "decision-making game" in this study so not to bias the participants that right or wrong behaviors were being measured.

DIT-2 scores have been validated to the measures of moral comprehension ($r = .60$) (Center for the Study of Ethical Development, 2017). Two studies, Crowson, DeBacker and Thoma (2007) and Thoma, Derryberry and Narvaez (2009), confirmed that moral judgment is independent from intellectual ability, socio-political views, and verbal abilities (Mayhew et al., 2015). The reliability of the DIT-2 has been measured by Cronbach's alpha from .77 to .81 (Center for the Study of Ethical Development, 2017). Gneezy's (2005) "deception game" was adapted from Crawford and Sobel's (1982) "Cheap Talk." "Cheap Talk" has been used in research since the 1980s and the longevity of this game indicates the value in both validity and reliability when used to investigate behavior.

Data Analysis

Both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were performed on the data by the use of the IBM software program, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics were performed on data from the demographic survey to describe the characteristics of the participants in TM1 and TM2. The two groups were compared in relation to age, gender, credit hours earned, GPA, type of business major declared, and their faith background. The scored DIT-2 results were analyzed to determine if a significant difference was present in the level of moral development between participants from TM1 and TM2. The mean and standard deviation were calculated to describe the central measure of tendency for the DIT-2 scores for both TM1 and TM2. The t-test for independent samples, was used to determine if a significant difference was evident in moral maturity between the two groups. The level of significance (alpha level) was set at 5%. Because the development of moral cognition is gradual, a posttest of the DIT-2 was not necessary. As Rest (1986) stated, "there is no reason to believe that the reorganization of basic cognitive structures can take place instantaneously or even overnight" (p. 205). Moral action was tested with the decision-making game pretest and posttest for TM1 and TM2. Analysis of the pretest-posttest data was performed with cross tabulation for observed and expected counts from the decision-making game. Pearson's chi-square test for independence was performed to test for significant association between the pretest and posttest game results. The level of significance was set at 5%. Changes in moral behavior between pretest and posttest scores were determined with cross tabulation for the outcomes of: Truth/Truth, Lie/Lie, Truth/Lie, and Lie/Truth.

Results

Demographic Survey. When the demographic data from TM1 and TM2 were compared, the groups were closely related as shown in Table 1. The only category that indicated a discrepancy was that of the primary language spoken, $\chi^2(1, N = 27) = 5.80$, $p = .016$ (Table 4.1). Although U.S. citizenship was similar for both TM1 and TM2, only 59% of the participants from TM2 used English as their primary language. Ninety four percent of the participants in TM1 used English as their primary language. Because the hypothesis was based on the comparison of two teaching methods, it was important to identify significant differences between the two groups, which could affect moral action. Overall, the demographic results from TM1 and TM2 were consistent; the groups could be compared.

Table 1
Descriptive Results for Demographic Data for TM1 and TM2

Demographic traits	TM1 n = 16	TM2 n = 11	TM1 & TM2 n = 27	Chi-squares & t-tests
Age (mean years)	21.1	20.9	21.6	$t = 1.71$
Gender: Female	44%	37%	41%	$\chi^2 = 0.15$
Grade Level:[1]				$\chi^2 = 0.15$
Sophomore	6%	18%	12%	
Junior	50%	36%	44%	
Senior	44%	46%	44%	
GPA: > 3.0	62%	72%	67%	$\chi^2 = 0.88$
Political Ideology (mode)[2]	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	$\chi^2 = 5.67$
Citizenship: U.S.	100%	91%	97%	$\chi^2 = 1.51$
Primary Language: English	94%	55%	78%	$\chi^2 = 5.80$*
Religious Activity:				$\chi^2 = 3.78$
Weekly	25%	27%	26%	
Monthly	13%	0%	8%	
Occasionally	13%	18%	15%	
None/No answer	49%	55%	51%	
Prior Ethics Course: Yes	38%	27%	33%	$\chi^2 = 0.31$

[1] Determined by number of completed units
[2] Political Ideology ranged from extremely conservative to extremely liberal
* significant at the .05 level

Moral Development. The instrument used for measuring moral development was Bebeau and Thoma's (2003) Defining Issues Test (DIT-2) version 3.0 obtained from the Center for the Study of Ethical Development at the University of Alabama. The DIT-2 results were scored in three ordered categories based from lowest to highest level of moral maturity: Personal Interest, Maintaining Norms, and Post-Conventional Maturity. The P Score was reported as a percent representing a person's preference to post-conventional moral thinking (Bebeau & Thoma, 2003). Descriptive statistical tests were performed for each of the three ordered categories and the P Scores from the DIT-2 data. Central tendency was calculated and reported for the entire sample population; separately for TM1 and TM2 and combined for TM1 and TM2. Independent samples t-tests were run on the three categories of the DIT-2 and the P Scores to determine if the differences in results between participants in

TM1 and participants in TM2 were significant. The results indicated that there were no significant differences for Personal Interest between TM1 (M = 37.75, SD = 16.08) participants and TM2 (M = 37.27, SD = 13.48) participants; t(25) = .081, p = .936 (Table 4.3). Results also indicated that there were no significant differences in Maintaining Norms scores between TM1 participants (M = 28.50, SD = 10.80) and TM2 participants (M = 33.10, SD = 14.92); $t(25) = .930$, $p = .361$ (Table 4.3). The t-test run on the third category, Post Conventional, also resulted in non-significant results between the participants of TM1 (M = 25.63, SD = 15.70) and participants of TM2 (M = 22.00, and SD = 12.46); $t(25) = .639$, $p = .529$ (Table 4.3). The results for the t-test of the overall P Scores from the DIT-2 were also not significant in differences between TM1 participants (M = 24.75%, SD = 14.98%) and TM2 participants (M = 17.95%, SD = 11.37%); $t(25) = 1.272$, $p = .215$ (Table 4.3). The lack of significant differences in DIT-2 scores between the control group (TM1) and the experimental group (TM2) provided evidence that moral development was similar prior to the intervention of action-oriented teaching methods to TM2. A summary of these results is available in Table 2.

Table 2
Statistical Results for Differences in Moral Development by Teaching Method

DIT2 Categories	TM1 n = 16 Mean (SD)	TM2 n = 11 Mean (SD)	t -statistic
Personal Interest	37.75 (16.08)	37.27 (13.48)	$t(25) = .081$, $p = .936$
Maintaining Norms	28.50 (10.80)	33.10 (14.92)	$t(25) = .930$, $p = .361$
Post Conventional	25.63 (15.70)	22.00 (12.46)	$t(25) = .639$, $p = .529$
P Scores	24.75% (14.98%)	17.95% (11.37%)	$t(25) = 1.272$, $p = .215$

Moral Action. Because the control group, TM1, and the intervention group, TM2, had similar demographic traits and moral development, the groups were compared for the dependent variable, moral action. Pretest and posttest data from the groups were analyzed with chi-square to determine whether a significant difference existed between TM1 and TM2. Table 3 summarizes the results from the pretest cross tabulations for TM1 and TM2.

Table 3
Cross Tabulation:
Moral Action between TM1 and TM2 during the Pretest

Pretest Game Results

Teaching Method		Truth	Lie	Total
TM1 (n = 16)	Count	7	9	16
	Expected	8.9	7.1	16
TM2 (n = 11)	Count	8	3	11
	Expected	6.1	4.9	11
	Total	15	12	27

Cross tabulation from the pretest decision-making game, indicated participants from TM1 yielded a greater number of participants lying or taking deceptive action than participants from TM2 (Table 3). Moral behavior resulted in 43.75% of TM1 participants compared to 72.73% of TM2. Pearson's chi-square test for independence was performed and it indicated that there was no significant association between teaching method and pretest game results, $\chi^2(1, N = 27) = 2.217$, $p = .137$.

The posttest cross tabulation results from TM1 and TM2 are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4
Cross Tabulation:
Moral Action between TM1 and TM2 during the Posttest

Postest Game Results

Teaching Method		Truth	Lie	Total
TM1 (n = 16)	Count	6	10	16
	Expected	7.1	8.9	16
TM2 (n = 11)	Count	6	5	11
	Expected	4.9	6.1	11
	Total	12	15	27

Cross tabulation from the posttest decision-making game, indicated participants from TM1 yielded a greater number of participants lying or taking a deceptive action than participants from TM2 (Table 4.5). Moral behavior resulted in 37.50% of TM1 participants acting truthfully compared to 54.55% of TM2 (Figure 4.2). Pearson's chi-square from the posttest indicated that no significant difference was evident between the two teaching methods, $\chi^2(1, N = 27) = .767, p = .381$.

A change in moral behavior between the pretest and posttest for TM1 and TM2 was tested with chi-square. Eleven participants changed their behavior between the pretest and posttest. An improvement in moral action was evident in four participants (two in TM1 and two in TM2) who lied during the pretest and were truthful during the posttest. A decline in moral action was seen in seven participants (three in TM1; four in TM2) who were truthful during the pretest and chose to lie during the posttest. Sixteen participants chose the same action in their pretest and posttest. These results are highlighted in Table 5.

Table 5
Cross Tabulation:
Change in Behavior between Pretest and Posttest by Teaching Method

		Moral Action Change in Action from Pretest to Posttest				
Teaching Method		**Lie-Lie**	**Truth-Lie**	**Lie-Truth**	**Truth-Truth**	**Total**
TM1 (n = 16)	Count	7	3	2	4	16
	Expected	4.7	4.1	2.4	4.7	16
TM2 (n = 11)	Count	1	4	2	4	11
	Expected	3.3	2.9	1.6	3.3	11
	Total	8	7	4	8	27

In order to test the influence of the teaching method, the researcher identified the change in the participants' behavior from their pretest to their posttest. For statistical analysis, participants were classified into one of four categories. If they lied on the pretest and lied on the posttest they would be in "Lie/Lie." If the participant lied on the pretest and told the truth on the posttest they would be categorized as "Lie/Truth." The resulting two categories were for participants that told the truth in the pretest and chose to lie (Truth/Lie) or tell the truth (Truth/Truth) during the posttest. The change in behavior between the pretest and posttest decision-making game for TM1 and TM2 was tested with chi-square. The combination of participants from TM1 and TM2

(n = 27) resulted in changed behavior from eleven participants between the pretest and posttest. Moral action improved (Lie/Truth) for four participants while moral action declined (Truth/Lie) for seven participants. The behavior the remaining sixteen participants remained the same between pretest and posttest. Of these sixteen, eight participants remained truthful (Truth/Truth) and eight continued to lie (Lie/Lie) between the pretest and posttest. A chi-square test was run to identify if there was an association between the teaching method (TM1 or TM2) and the change in behavior from the pretest to the posttest. Results indicated there was not a significant association between the teaching method and the change in behavior, $\chi^2(3, N = 27) = 3.849$, $p = .278$. This researcher will therefore fail to reject the null hypothesis that teaching method has no influence on moral action. It stands that, 'There is no difference between participants taking a traditional business ethics course, TM1, from that of participants taking the same course with an emphasis on action-oriented learning methods, TM2, in regard to moral action.'

Discussion

It would have been expected that regardless of the teaching method used, that learning ethics would have had a positive impact on behavior (Block & Cwick, 2007; Felton & Sims, 2005; Fisher, J., 2003; Jones, D., 2009; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Sekerka, 2009; Trevino & Weaver, 2003). Although the small sample size of this study was not robust enough to indicate associations or relationships between the two teaching methods and the participants' change in behavior, this study did confirm that behavioral changes, not just the intention to act, occurred. The results of the pretest game indicated that 43.75% of participants from TM1 and 72.73% from TM2 took a moral action. The posttest game results demonstrated a decline in moral action with 37.50% of TM1 and 54.55% of TM2 participants acting morally. From this small sample (n = 27), eleven participants demonstrated a change in behavior. Four of these participants demonstrated an improvement in moral behavior, pretest lie to posttest truth, while seven showed a decline, pretest truth to posttest lie. Participants' changing from ethical behavior to unethical behavior after taking a course in business ethics is contrary to logic. These results are from a small sample and the expected values when using the chi-square were too low for accurate testing. Although these results cannot be verified, this study does raise the issue that the past measurement of intention may not have accurately provided results for ethical behavior. This relates back to the problem statement from this study, 'Ethics can be learned. but the problem is that this learning must be translated into action' (Cloninger & Selvarajan, 2010; Gunia et al., 2012; Marnburg, 2003; Neubaum et al., 2009; Nguyen et al., 2008; Sekerka & Bagozzi, 2007).

In conclusion, past research did not test behavior but relied on moral awareness, moral judgment, and ethical intention to measure learning ethics. Former studies used moral development and reasoning ability to relate to moral behavior (Bowden & Smythe, 2008; Hanson & Moore, 2014; Marnburg, 2003), but recent work has warned that there are problems when using these behavioral variables (Desplaces, 2008; Hanson & Moore, 2014; Lavine & Roussin, 2012; Marnburg, 2003; McWilliams & Nahavandi, 2006; Nguyen, 2008). There are differences between intention and the desire to act from actually taking an action. The outcome tested in this study was moral action, not ethical intention. It stands that no difference exists between participants in TM1 from that of participants taking the same course with TM2 in regard to moral action. The results indicated that one teaching method was not superior to the other method.

Recommendations

1. The problem in teaching ethics is that ethical learning must be translated into action (Sekerka & Bagozzi, 2007; Gunia et.al, 2012). Because past studies primarily measured ethical intention rather than moral action, there is uncertainty in whether or not the participant would have followed up on their ethical decision-making. When moral action is tested as the outcome for ethical behavior, there is little doubt that the final outcome is accurate. It is recommended that moral action be measured as an outcome for ethical behavior. Gneezy's (2005) deception game gave the players a choice of taking an action that was truthful or one that was deceptive. Other business games could be modified or new testing developed to record an action.
2. Secondly, continued investigation on teaching methods in regard to moral action is recommended. McWilliams and Nahavandi claim that experiential student learning, when applied to ethical theories, is superior pedagogy for teaching ethics (2006). This study did not find, however, that experiential methods were superior. The differences between experiential and traditional teaching methods may have overlapped in this study. Future studies need more delineation between the teaching methods. Another possibility for the difference could have been that moral action was not the outcome used in the study by McWilliams and Nahavandi (2006). Regardless, more work needs to be done on teaching methods and moral behavior.

3. The third recommendation for future research is to enlarge the sample and timeframe. This study was based on sound methodology, but the small sample size limited analysis of the data. Future sampling could be from academic settings, but could also be from corporations that conduct ethical training. Multiple settings could be considered as well. Because moral development takes time for the process to be completed (Rest, 1986), a semester-long study may not have been adequate for the assessment of ethical learning. A prolonged timeframe is recommended. For future research, longitudinal studies over an academic program could demonstrate ethical learning throughout the coursework.
4. The final recommendation is to conduct cross-discipline research. Business is a field that encompasses economics, psychology, sociology, law, and other disciplines. Each of these areas is doing research in the field of ethics. With collaboration, new knowledge can be combined that leads to a fresh understanding. The deception game used in this study was from Gneezy's work in economics.

Conclusion

The disconnection between "knowing" versus "doing" affects research on moral behavior. If "knowing" the intention to act is measured, can the researcher be sure that the intention will be actualized? On the other hand, if "doing" is measured, then the outcome is concrete. Again, the problem with teaching ethical norms is that this learning must be translated into moral action (Sekerka & Bagozzi, 2007; Gunia et al, 2012). Moral action as an outcome for learning ethics is needed to provide evidence for the efficacy of teaching business ethics. This study investigated the moral action of undergraduate business students at a faith-based university taking an undergraduate course in business ethics with the question, "Does teaching business ethics with the use of experiential methods affect moral action?" The hypothesis stated that participants taking a business ethics course based on traditional methods would demonstrate significantly less improvement in moral action than participants engaged in experiential learning. The result of this study indicated that no relationship was apparent between participants taking a business ethics course with traditional methods from those taking the same course with experiential methods in regard to moral action. Building on this small study, much more work must be done to continue to build a base of knowledge around learning ethics to promote moral action. ***LEJ***

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The Elements of Effective Mentoring

By Rebecca Stanton and Ann McKellar

With perennial teacher shortages in our Lutheran schools (Muehl, 2017) and the high costs associated with recruiting quality teachers (Simurda, 2004; Curran & Goldrick, 2002), principals must educate themselves about the best practices for retaining teachers in their schools. Principals play an important role in the recruitment and retention of teachers (Brock & Grady, 1998). One practice that has proven to retain teachers is quality induction and mentoring (Podolsky, Kini, Bishop, & Darling-Hammond, 2016). If principals act as team-leader supervisor(s) who provide support and resources (Acheson & Gall, 2003), they will more effectively enhance the mentoring process in their schools, thereby retaining teachers longer.

Historically, mentoring has been an important aspect of career development. From woodworking apprenticeships to surgical residencies, professionals have played a critical role in the training of those new to their fields. The root meaning for "mentor" originated in Homer's epic, *The Odyssey.* Odysseus was away from home for an extended period and left his toddler son with his friend, Mentor. Mentor raised Telemachus and was such a good role model that his name became the noun and verb "mentor" (Wooden & Yaeger, 2009).

But what determines if mentoring will be effective? How can we do more than just help a new professional get his or her start in their field, but also set them up for a lifetime of success? Through years of research and practice as mentors of pre-service and novice teachers, we have assembled the following elements of mentoring – the kind of guidance which is not only effective, but is also life-altering in that it prepares the whole person professionally and personally for sustained accomplishment and enjoyment in their career. We share how we apply these elements at Concordia University, Irvine (CUI). This is not a program or an assignment to be followed, simply memorizing strategies – it is a lifestyle. As John Wooden (2009) states:

> While I made my living as a coach, I have lived my life to be a mentor and to be mentored! Constantly. Everything in the world has been passed down...Every piece of knowledge is something that has been shared by

> someone else. If you understand this, as I do, mentoring becomes your true legacy. It is the greatest inheritance you can give to others. It is why you get up every day-to teach and to be taught. (p. 4)

Mentoring Myths

It is important to recognize the myths of mentoring, in order to avoid adhering to them and thereby reducing the effectiveness of the guidance. For example, many people equate mentoring with evaluation. If the mentor determines the employment, then the novice teacher is less likely to ask for assistance when needed out of fear of being seen as lacking. The novice teacher is also more likely to be nervous when being observed and will therefore not perform as well.

Another myth is that veteran teachers make good mentors. This is not necessarily the case. Mentors must be current on the best practices in teaching and supervision. They must also be interested in the content being taught and in being a mentor.

Yet another myth is that mentors and novice teachers can carry full loads. If their loads are reduced, they will have more time and energy for collaboration. Finally, many people believe that mentoring is temporary, perhaps for 18 weeks (such as during student teaching). Again, not necessarily so – it depends on the novice teacher's needs, and therefore mentoring may last one to three years (Brewster & Railsback, 2001; Acheson & Gall, 2003; Moir & Gless, n.d.; Feiman-Nemser, 2012; Jones, 2012).

CUI: Student teaching lasts 90 school days. Our induction program is a further two years, unless the novice teacher already has specific professional experiences, which can allow for "early completer" status and only one year of mentoring. When matching novice teachers to mentors, finding one at the novice teacher's campus or district is the optimum match, if possible.

Mentor Characteristics:

There are certain characteristics that mentors should possess in order to be effective. As mentioned above, they must be current on best practices, such as content, instruction, and classroom management. They must also understand adult learning and mentoring techniques, such as Cognitive Coaching (Garmston, Linder & Whitaker, 1993). Mentors must be open-minded in order that novice teachers can develop their own identity as teachers and not merely be clones of the mentor or other previous teachers. Mentors must be empathetic and good listeners, so that when the novice teacher shares about their difficulties, the mentor can adequately respond. If possible, mentors should teach the same grade level or content area as the novice teacher. Finally, mentors and novice teachers must set clear goals and expectations and be able

to adhere to them (Brewster & Railsback, 2001; Curran & Goldrick, 2002; Feiman-Nemser, 2012; Jones, 2012).

CUI: Our novice teachers evaluate their mentors. If those key mentor characteristics are lacking, the next decision is whether more training is needed or if we will not use them in the future.

Relationships

Relationships are an essential element of mentoring. The appropriate relationship starts with a welcoming letter of introduction and the very first meeting between the mentor and novice teacher, when they should meet for an extended time simply to get to know each other. Building rapport and mutual trust early on is crucial for future success (Boreen, Johnson, Niday, & Potts, 2009). No administrator should be at that meeting, or perhaps at any meeting between the mentor and novice teacher. Whenever they meet, the novice teacher should feel free to talk about any stressors – not just about teaching issues, but also about personal issues that might add to their classroom stress. When the novice teacher's personal needs are met as well as professional ones, then the effectiveness of mentoring is increased (Hoerr, 2005). Mentors must maintain confidentiality; otherwise, novice teachers will be fearful of divulging problems and seeking answers out of fear of reprisal from administrators.

CUI: While we do utilize initial "meet and greet" meetings, and the administrator attends them in the induction program, those meetings are simply to establish program expectations (observations, paperwork, etc.). Unless there is a concern, later meetings are usually between the mentor and novice teacher only.

Orientation

A great way to begin a mentor partnership is with a simple orientation specific for the novice teacher's instructional setting. In *Role and Responsibilities of School-Based Mentors* (2012), the New York City Department of Education suggests these steps to help novice teachers identify and access school and community resources:

- develop classroom rules and routines with classroom management
- set up classroom (*Look for elements of Universal Design in the Classroom Environment**)
- meet city-wide /statewide* instructional expectations
- plan lessons
- look at student work
- use formal and informal assessment strategies
- analyze student work to differentiate instruction
- understand and use the curriculum and student standards

- develop short–term and long-term goals
- prepare for supervisors' observations
- communicate effectively with parents
- prepare for parent-teacher conferences
- understand and comply with clerical responsibilities (p. 3)

**authors' addition*

This mentor guide also provides a helpful suggested calendar to identify which months to focus on the above elements and other resources for training mentors or developing a program for private schools or districts without a formal Induction or fifth year program. The PDF of the mentor guide can be accessed at the following link:
http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/EC6D30FF-B47B-4ACB-8480-4FC10DE122FB/0/MentorGuide20112012.pdf

CUI: California Induction Standards require that at the beginning of each placement, novice teachers fill out a form that lists important contacts on campus and emergency procedures, as well as items of information similar to what the NYC handbook suggests.

Communication

Communication is another key element. If possible, mentors and novice teachers should have release-time to meet. Mentors and novice teachers should communicate regularly and honestly. This can be done in person, on the phone or video chat, or by email or text. Depending on the novice teacher's needs, this frequency could be weekly or monthly. Finally, mentors and novice teachers must actively listen to each other in order for ideas to properly be exchanged (Curran & Goldrick, 2002; Moir & Gless, n.d.). Student teachers must know that they can approach their university supervisors if they are having problems with their cooperating teacher and that the mentor will listen to their side and help to work out a solution (Daniels, Patterson, & Sunston, 2015).

CUI: Our cooperating teachers are in the classroom with the student teachers every day. Our university supervisors observe them teaching lessons every two to three weeks and communicate in between observations, as necessary. In the induction program, both the onsite support providers and the university supervisors check in with the novice teachers weekly. We have designated Collaborate "classrooms" on Blackboard tied to our learning management system for video conferencing, but phone calls, emails and in-person meetings are also utilized.

Modeling Teaching Practices

Another helpful practice is for mentors to teach sample lessons in the novice teacher's classroom to model best practices, classroom management,

and any other skills that the novice teacher is working on (Curran & Goldrick, 2002). Or the new teacher observes while the mentor teaches in his or her own classroom to see the mentor's "stance and dance" (Allen, 2009). When they observe the novice teacher during instruction, mentors must be responsive to their needs at that moment. They should tailor their assistance – whether advice or tools – to each individual novice teacher. Mentors should give specific feedback as soon after the observation as possible, in order that all important topics are addressed. This real-time mentoring requires that the mentor must not focus solely on their own agenda or the official program timeline, but instead be flexible in order to meet the novice teacher's needs (Curran & Goldrick, 2002; Grossman & Davis, 2012).

CUI: University supervisors are encouraged to observe student teachers more frequently than every two to three weeks, if need be. They do not need to adhere to a rigid schedule of observations, but can see a particular lesson if the student teacher requests it, even if they just recently observed another similar lesson. We ask that cooperating teachers take over the class for a few minutes after the lesson, in order that mentors can give the novice teachers feedback right away.

We have instituted virtual observations for some of the required meetings. We have found that virtual observations can also be effective. The novice teacher records him or herself and shares that via Google Drive, YouTube (create a private channel and share the link), or another means. They can also live stream their teaching for the mentor to view. If virtual observations are being utilized, there are a few precautions that should be taken. First, the novice teacher needs to verify with the school's administrators if the students' parents must sign release forms before any videoing or live streaming. Second, the novice teacher needs to be sure that the sound is being picked up sufficiently and that the video is capturing all of their teaching space. Third, because the mentor is not on site for the observation, the mentor must give feedback as soon as possible after the lesson in order to correct any issues and to reinforce positive behaviors.

Reflection

Yet another essential element for effective mentoring is to develop a culture and shared language of reflection. Mentors need to model reflection for the novice teacher and guide them through the process (Allen, 2009; Boreen et al., 2009). Many mentoring or induction programs for novice teachers use the four-step plan, which is more like a continuous process of PLAN, ACT (TEACH), REFLECT, APPLY. This can be done through guided questions based on lessons or the novice teacher's self-identified progress in mastering specific state-mandated standards. Districts or states may already

have a recommended template or handbook for reflective discussions related to instructional planning to improve student engagement and academic progress or professional goals.

The reflective process may take place either verbally or in writing. It should be done daily or at least weekly. Novice teachers may also video themselves teaching a couple times per semester and review it for the purposes of reflection, using a simple template. No matter what form it takes, novice teachers and mentors should maintain reflective practices as an on-going aspect of the partnership discussion concerning all areas of their teaching practice – lesson planning and execution, interaction with students, classroom management, even interactions with parents, administrators and other teachers. The reflective discussions may assist novice teachers with setting and reaching professional-development goals for the school or semester. The mentor should go over these reflections with the novice teacher, in order to refine the reflection process, address any concerns, and celebrate successes (Acheson & Gall, 2003; Locraft Cuddapah & Spratley Burtin, 2012).

CUI: Student teachers reflect on specific questions posed on forms during each of the first eight weeks. During the remainder of their placement, they reflect on their progress toward mastering the Teaching Performance Expectations (TPEs) as required by California. Induction students reflect on their current self-ratings on various professional practices, choose two areas for focus, and then reflect on their progress toward mastery in those areas.

Conclusion

Martin Luther is credited with saying: "When schools flourish, all flourishes." Administrators and teachers are called to strengthen schools for the benefit of our students and our collective future. The above elements of effective mentoring can serve as a guide toward fulfilling that calling.

For more information or help in setting up a mentor program, designed in particular for your school's unique setting and needs, contact Dr. Rebecca Stanton (Rebecca.stanton@cui.edu) and Dr. Ann McKellar (ann.mckellar@cui.edu). ***LEJ***

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High-Quality Teacher Induction and Multi-Year Mentoring

Are the New Teachers in Your School Thriving or Merely Surviving?

By Mary Zaharis

After a long year of teaching and learning, summer vacation has come and gone for nearly 3.8 million teachers and 50.6 million students in American schools (Ingersoll, Merrill, Stuckey & Collins, 2018; Alliance for Excellent Education, 2010; NCES, 2019). School leaders have been planning for the beginning of the school year, preparing budgets, maintaining the facility, ordering textbooks and supplies, and, most importantly, hiring teachers to replace approximately 200,000 teachers who will not be returning in the fall (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018).

With this number of positions to fill, many newly-graduated teachers will be hired to assume their first teaching position. This is an exciting first step for new teachers, and although eager and excited to start the school year, the possibility that they will stay on the job past their first year is a statistic that is not in their favor (Bartell, 2004; Ganser, 2005; Goodwin, 2012; Goldrick, 2016). The research suggests that out of every two teachers hired, one will leave the profession within five years (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2010; NCES, 2019). Teacher turnover of this magnitude is not in the best interest of our students and takes a toll on district and parochial-school budgets. American schools spend up to $2.6 billion annually to replace teachers who have left the profession (Ingersoll, Merrill, Stuckey & Collins, 2018; Alliance for Excellent Education, 2010). With a new teacher attrition rate of nearly 44%, the importance of supporting teachers is worthy of further dialogue and discourse if every child in our schools is to have an effective teacher (Hunt, 1968; Schrerer, 1999; Hanushek, 2005; Strong & Villar, 2007; Krasnoff, 2014; Ingersoll et al., 2018).

Background of the Issues

Teaching is one of few professions where novices are expected to perform the same tasks as veterans in the field. Due to their lack of experience and support however, new teachers may be experiencing the most stressful conditions in the school. Researchers in the field suggest that regardless of the type or quality of teacher preparation program completed, new teachers will enter perhaps the most vulnerable stage of their teaching career (Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2000;

Moir, Barlin, Gless & Miles, 2009; Podolsky, Kini, Bishop, Darling-Hammond, 2016). Krasnoff (2014) suggests that the first three years of teaching are critical to the development of what may become the next 30 years of teaching practice in the teacher's career. Special attention for how schools provide support to new teachers is not only critical to the success of these new teachers, but, more importantly, to the success of their students.

Recent research suggests that 14% of new teachers leave the field by the end of their first year, 33% leave within three years, and 44% leave within five years of teaching. This high rate of new-teacher attrition is especially significant in hard-to-staff schools where there is high poverty and low achievement. Students in these schools continually face a revolving door of inexperienced teachers who may negatively impact their ability to learn (Ingersoll et al., 2018). Without proper support, novices who are left to struggle on their own, work in unstable learning environments that impact the success of both student and teacher. If nothing is done to prevent this constant churn of new teachers leaving the profession, we will continue to exacerbate the inequities that exist in schools and that inevitably extend out to larger society (Ingersoll, 2012; Krasnoff 2014).

Serious Learning Needs

Long-time teachers have well known that learning to teach is a process that takes patience and time. School leaders who overlook the fact that the beginning years of teaching are a very stressful time for the novice, however, may not share this wisdom. During this crucial period of development, novices learn to apply the theory and knowledge acquired during their pre-service preparation to the practice of teaching and need the continual support and guidance of a trusted veteran teacher (Bartell, 2004).

The first year of teaching is a period of many firsts. Novice teachers must learn to solve problems, establish professional routines, and deepen emerging skills in order to become effective classroom teachers (Moir, et al., 2009). Among many things learned during the first years of teaching, beginning teachers need to gain local knowledge of their students, understand how to design thoughtful curriculum that addresses the needs of all learners, and understand the political landscape and culture of the school.

Additionally, new teachers must have a full understanding of the teacher-evaluation system used by their district. Novice teachers, who are being formally assessed for the first time, must understand how they will be evaluated and to which standards they will be held accountable. New teachers, much like their veteran colleagues, are expected to successfully design and implement responsive curriculum in diverse learning communities where the needs of all learners are met. Evaluation can be a stressful time for new teachers, but with proper support

and mentoring, it can also be a time when teachers learn how to improve their practice in order to increase student achievement.

Stages of Teacher Development

Whether or not support is provided for the novice teacher, according to Moir, et al., (2009), there are predictable stages that teachers will go through in their first years of teaching. New teachers move through several predictable stages ranging from the anticipation phase of teaching to the reflective-practitioner phase. If new teachers are expected to develop to their fullest potential, a qualified mentor must support each of these stages. In the first stage of anticipation, new teachers are finishing their teacher preparation programs and moving closer to completion. This is a time of great excitement because they are finally approaching their first teaching assignment.

Novices soon learn that the first month of teaching is overwhelming and may work as many as 70 hours each week trying to stay above the relentless waves of expectations coming their way. Their time is consumed with the day-to-day routine of teaching and struggles with classroom management. This leaves them feeling exhausted, with little time to reflect or recover for the next day of teaching. During this period, novices may experience disillusionment and exhaustion as they encounter many first-time events such as curriculum night and parent-teacher conferences. Novices also experience low self-esteem and self-doubt at this stage and are in need of very frequent encouragement and support.

The new teacher manages to make it until winter break, which allows them to return to somewhat of a normal lifestyle for a few weeks. Slow improvement of the novices' attitude toward teaching is illuminated by a glimmer of competence and confidence in their new role. If supported, the novice begins moving from merely surviving to thriving by focusing on the bigger picture of teaching and learning.

The reflective stage is the final stage in which the novice feels the end in sight. During the last weeks of school, novices begin to reflect back over the year and think about what was successful and what was not. At this stage, the novice begins to feel the excitement and anticipation of the beginning of their second year of teaching (Moir et. al, 2009).

Supporting New Teachers to Thrive

In order to help new teachers thrive, not merely survive, during their first years of teaching, understanding the stages of teacher development will help school leaders know how to offer targeted support that will lead to improved teacher practice. Such support can be provided through effective, high-quality induction programs that have been shown to have a positive impact on new

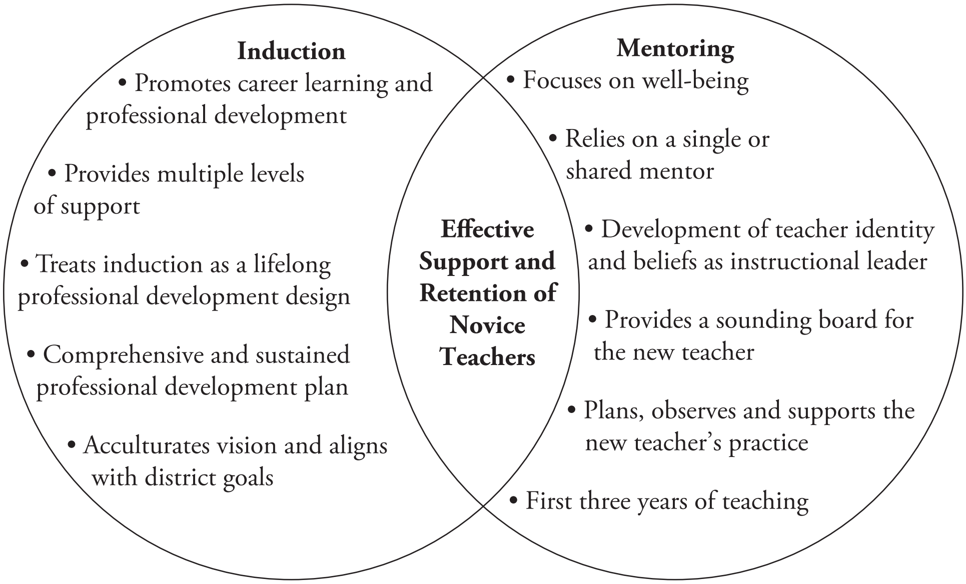
teacher retention and the achievement of their students (Lipton & Wellman 2003; Wong, 2003; Ingersoll, 2012; CCSESA, 2016; Ingersoll et al., 2019; NCUE, 2019).

In a comprehensive high-quality induction program, multi-year mentoring plays a key role in the support of novice teachers. A solid body of empirical research supports the positive effect that mentoring has on the quality of instructional practice, retention and the capacity the teacher has to improve student achievement (Ingersoll, 2012). The process of multi-year mentoring has also been shown to have a positive impact on the veteran teacher as well. Quality teacher induction and effective multi-year mentoring that is built around job-embedded coaching aligned to district goals will help the novice teacher transition seamlessly from his or her teacher preparation program to the first years of successful teaching (Hanushek, 2005; Adamson & Darling-Hammond, 2011; Behrstock-Sherratt, 2014). In addition to understanding the stages of teacher development, it is important for school leaders to understand why attrition is so high in the teaching profession, especially in their small world within that profession.

Why Beginning Teachers Leave

Ingersoll (2018) suggests that nearly 44% of new teachers leave because of the heavy workload, school working conditions, degree of autonomy and discretion allowed over issues that arise in their classrooms, and the level of collective faculty influence over decisions that affect their jobs. Novice minorities are documented to have an even a higher rate of attrition in their early years with 55% leaving the profession in the first five years. Other reasons for leaving include the high level of expectations and scope of teaching required of novices. This is exacerbated by feelings of isolation due to the lack of support the new teacher may be receiving. A gap emerges between the novice's expectation of what teaching should be like and the reality of their jobs. Surprisingly, reasons for leaving are not typically salary-related but are attributed to excessive high-stakes testing, disruptive student behavior, poor leadership and the idea that teaching is merely a temporary profession until something better comes along (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Krasnoff, 2014; Podolsky et al., 2016; Ingersoll, 2018). (see Figure 1)

Figure 1
Effective Support and Retention of Novice Teachers



Why Do Teachers Stay?

Equally important in the crisis of high attrition for early-career teachers is understanding why teachers remain in their schools and in the profession. Novice teachers need to feel competent and have the self-satisfaction of a job well done. Teachers in general are more likely to stay when they are recognized and supported in their efforts. This leads to a sense of autonomy in their workplace and higher job satisfaction. Both novice and veteran teachers are attracted to school leaders who are good instructional leaders, like-minded colleagues and readily available for instructional support that enables them to be effective educators (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Teachers who are given dedicated time to interact and collaborate with supportive colleagues and receive job-embedded and meaningful professional development that has been differentiated for their individual needs feel supported by their school administrators. Compensation is important, but not a determining factor for leaving. Working conditions, status, and job satisfaction are, however, critical to their retention. Allowing teacher input into important decisions that affect their daily work with students is also an important factor in teacher retention (Podolsky et al., 2016).

Induction and Multi-Year Mentoring

The success of schools is ultimately determined by improved teacher practice that leads to optimal achievement for every student. "New teachers hired today

are the teachers of the next generation. Their success will determine the success of an entire generation of students. Their success can be ensured by providing them with a comprehensive, coherent professional development plan" (Wong, 2004, p. 41). Improving student achievement ultimately relies on the effectiveness of teacher practice, which, in turn, determines the quality of instruction the students receive.

One way to ensure the success of teachers entering the profession is through high-quality induction programs and multi-year mentoring support. Many school districts have realized this and have induction and mentoring programs in place, but the consistency and effectiveness of these programs vary. High-quality induction must be intentional and is a process of comprehensive, coherent, and sustained professional development for early-career teachers organized by the district to train, support, and retain them.

Stansbury and Zimmerman (2000) suggest that beginning teacher support can be viewed as a continuum starting with emotional support and encouragement to stay the course and eventually leading to intentional development and improvement of teacher practice. Induction is not a crash course in teaching, nor is it a stand-alone program. It intentionally and systematically builds a strong culture and community of teachers who are learners. Strong induction programs bring teachers and leaders together in a collaborative setting that leads to a professional learning community filled with positive change (Carroll, 2007).

Mentoring is not a stand-alone program, either, but is part of a comprehensive, high-quality induction program that leads to effective support and retention of novice teachers.

Mentoring is the process in which a more skilled person (veteran teacher) serves as a role model whose basic function is to help the new teacher. Mentoring is not induction, but is considered a component of the induction process. Mentors are the most important part of the process of induction, but in order for mentors to be effective, they must receive continual professional development and proper training in the vision and mission of the district (Lipton, Wellman & Humbard, 2003); Garvey, 2004; Locraft-Cuddapah, 2012; SREB, 2019). (see Figure 2)

Figure 2
Why Do Teachers Leave?

Note: Percentages do not add to 100 because teachers can select multiple reasons.

Source: LPI analysis of the Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS), 2013, from the Schools and Staffing Surveys, National Center for Education Statistics.

Feedback from New Teachers

What do new teachers want from their mentors in their first years of teaching? Research suggests that new teachers want mentors who share friendship as well as professional ideas with them and respect them as emerging professionals. They want a mentor to understand that although they are new, they have ideas they would like to share as well. If veteran teachers are open to learning from their new colleagues, an environment of trust, respect and rapport is quickly established for both novice teacher and mentor (Strong & Villar, 2007).

Novices have suggested that they want a mentor who helps them plan their first day of activities in the days prior to the beginning of school. With classroom management identified as a major struggle, many first-year teachers want a mentor who helps them understand how to build relationships with their students and their families. Novices have also suggested that they would like support with simple logistics such as how to set up their room, how to create classroom rules that will help them manage student behavior, and how to create schedules that will provide optimal learning opportunities for their students (Brighton, as cited in Scherer, 1999).

New teachers have also suggested that they would like to have mentors who observe their teaching practices in the classroom. This non-threatening feedback intended for improvement of the novice's practice is invaluable to the new teacher. Effectively learning what will be expected of them on formal evaluations helps lower the novice's initial anxiety about teacher evaluation. Novices find it valuable to be invited to observe their mentor and other teachers in their building so that they learn more about effective teaching. These guided opportunities provide meaningful, job-embedded professional development that occurs within the context of the novice's unique school setting (Scherer, 1999; Bieler, 2012; Locraft-Cuddapah & Sprately-Burtin, 2012; Podolsky et al., 2016; (Clement, 2019).

What Are the Roles of the Mentor and the Protégé?

A typical mentor is a veteran professional who takes an active interest in the development of a novice teacher. The mentor should have at least five years of experience with proficient-teacher-evaluation status. Mentors must understand the purpose, role, and process of mentoring in the district. They should be familiar with national, state, and district standards for teaching. An effective mentor represents a mosaic of support for the protégé.

Characteristics sought after in mentors include patience, excellent communication skills, being a good listener, flexibility, and someone with a good sense of humor. Developing a relationship of trust and confidentiality with the protégé is critical. An effective mentor is therefore willing to be a role model of teaching by demonstrating a strong commitment to the continual improvement of teaching and learning. Mentoring is a win-win situation for the mentor as they, too, grow professionally through the re-examination of their own practices and beliefs. (Teague, 2013; Clement, 2019; GDOE, 2019; NEA, 2019).

The role of the protégé is to be open and candid concerning his, or her, needs for professional development and growth. Many times, new teachers are unwilling to admit that they lack skill in specific areas because they fear their more experienced colleagues will harshly judge them. To grow, they must be willing to participate in all phases of the induction process and unafraid to ask questions. By realistically appraising their own strengths and weaknesses, the novice teacher grows in both skill and confidence. A sense of humor and the willingness to confide in their mentor creates lifelong friendships and provides the context for a seamless integration of theory and practice, engendering deep support and growth for the new teacher and for the mentor (Teague, 2013; GDOE, 2019; NEA, 2019).

Benefits of High-Quality Induction and Multi-Year Mentoring

Among the many benefits of high-quality induction and multi-year mentoring are higher retention rates of beginning teachers, increased levels of professional efficacy, improved teacher performance, earlier identification of weak teachers in need of assistance, and increased job satisfaction (Goodwin, 2012). High-quality and multi-year induction programs consider the following steps in the implementation and institutionalization of the process:

1. Determine goals and objectives for the program
2. Recruit highly-qualified mentors
3. Select mentors (not all outstanding teachers are necessarily talented mentors)
4. Train mentors and provide continual professional development at the mentoring level
5. Sanction and reinforce times for meaningful mentoring interactions
6. Focus interactions on well-structured time spent together reviewing classroom practice supported by data
7. Provide multi-year mentoring for the first three years of a teacher's practice
8. Evaluate program for effectiveness

Depending on the amount and quality of support they encounter in their first teaching job, new teachers can grow into highly competent ones, or they may develop counterproductive approaches to their teaching that force them to leave the profession entirely (Podolsky et al., 2016).

The effectiveness of high-quality programs for increasing retention, accelerating novice teachers' professional learning, and improving student achievement suggests that states and districts, with the support of the federal government, should invest in these programs. Given the benefits of induction for retention and teacher effectiveness, these programs should be made available to all new teachers.

What Can Districts Do?

District leaders face the spiraling problem of losing new teachers during their first five years of service. If district leaders are to reverse this trend, attention must turn to developing high-quality induction programs, support services and mentoring relationships for novice teachers (Teague & Swan, 2013). Attention to high-quality programs developed specifically for new teachers can cut attrition rates and increase the effectiveness of new teachers. Informed leadership and dedication of funds specifically for this process need to be committed by the district in intentional ways, not as haphazard attempts at supporting this process (Winstead & Fry, 2007; Ingersoll, 2012).

Novice teachers need intense support during their first year of teaching, moderate support the second year and as-needed support their third year (Teague & Swan, 2013). With almost one-third of teachers leaving within the first three years and one-half leaving by their fifth year, many new teachers do not stay in the classroom long enough to develop effective teaching practices (Ingersoll, 2012). Well-designed and multi-year induction programs serve to support teachers beyond simply surviving to thriving in their first years of teaching and are good investments for the district (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Replacement costs for teachers range from $4,500 in smaller, rural communities to $20,000 in large, urban districts (Carroll, 2007; NTC, 2019). Districts can prevent high attrition rates by establishing a culture that creates and supports effective new-teacher induction and mentoring. District leaders must clearly communicate goals and expectations of effective induction programs, evaluate program effectiveness based on data collected and provide resources needed to sustain an effective program. (Winstead & Fry, 2007; Ingersoll, 2012).

What Can School Leaders Do?

School leaders can begin by recruiting and matching caring, eager, and capable mentors to the new teachers. It is most ideal if the mentor and the protégé teach close to the same grade level or subject matter (Lozinak, 2016; Moore, 2016). School leaders can ensure protected common planning periods and can assign new teachers to classrooms that keep them near their mentors and teaching colleagues to facilitate collaboration and minimize isolation. School leaders can encourage and support a school climate where all teachers can comfortably ask for help so that novice teachers feel confident to do so. They can promote good working conditions, which include a commitment to the vision, mission, and goals of the district's induction program and collaborative, shared decision-making. Communicating with the mentor and protégé frequently to qualitatively assess the effectiveness of the program determines the quality of relationships being developed, and ultimately ensures the positive impact the program has on student achievement (Winstead, 2007; Krasnoff, 2014; Moore, 2016; GDOE, 2019).

Finally, celebrating the successes of the induction and multi-year mentoring program will communicate the importance that supporting novice teachers has within the framework of successful schools.

Considering What Can Be

The research clearly supports comprehensive, high-quality induction programs and multi-year mentoring to accelerate professional growth of new teachers as effective means for reducing the rate of new-teacher attrition. Policy makers and legislators must be made aware of the teacher retention crisis and the

impact it has on student achievement. Only three states, Connecticut, Delaware and Iowa, require schools and districts to provide multi-year support for new teachers and require teachers to complete an induction program for a professional license (Goldrick, 2016).

The New Teacher Center (NTC), a national non-profit organization dedicated to improving student learning by guiding a new generation of educators, partnered with Dade County Public Schools in 2015 to create their Mentoring and Induction of New Teachers (MINT) program. This high-quality induction and multi-year mentoring program is designed to support new teachers entering the system and has significantly stemmed high attrition rates of early-career teachers in their district (MINT, 2016; NTC, 2019). The scale used to measure the success of the program is one in which the measure of teacher performance is directly linked to the amount of support provided for the early-career teachers. Early-intervention strategies implemented in this high-quality induction and multi-year mentoring program has led to improved teacher practice and more successful retention of teachers in their district.

The need to attract and retain new teachers in our schools is far too critical to leave up to chance. School leaders must discover the reasons for high attrition rates in their districts and consider following models such as the MINT program in Dade County Public Schools. If high attrition rates of new teachers are not reduced, we will continue to lose the best and brightest teachers for our students. The time for high-quality induction and multi-year mentoring programs has come. ***LEJ***

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Louisa May Alcott: More than a Little Woman

By Sandra Doering

More than 150 years ago, Louisa May Alcott's most famous book *Little Women* hit the bookstores and was immediately embraced by critics and the general population of those who loved to read family stories. To its credit, the book has maintained its popularity and since its publication *Little Women* has never been out of print. In a very rare incidence, this book has truly stood the test of time so much so that it has actually changed genres. When originally published in 1868, it was considered contemporary realistic fiction. But now, it remains an example of exemplary historical fiction highlighting the life of a family left behind while the father is away serving as a chaplain in the Civil War.

Louisa May Alcott wrote *Little Women* based on her own life and experiences. She, herself, had three sisters and her mother was often left to run the household with very little money because her husband was either unwilling or unable to support the family. Her father, a philosophical dreamer and frustrated transcendentalist, never seemed to be able to translate his lofty ideas into workable plans. When he was in his forties, he basically gave up trying to make a living (Acocella, 2018). This would affect Louisa's outlook on life and her perceived responsibilities dramatically. In her twenties, Alcott took on the burden of providing for her family and did so until her death in 1888.

In order to understand Louisa May Alcott as more than a 19th century little woman, it is necessary to examine some of the major influences she encountered and unique characteristics she exhibited from an early age on.

An Unconventional Early Education

Louisa was not formally educated; rather her parents, and the many intellectual friends they had, served as her teachers. Such philosophers as Henry David Thoreau, Margaret Fuller and Ralph Waldo Emerson frequented the Alcott home. Each of these philosophers espoused Transcendentalism; believing that all people should have the ability to advance in society and have the same rights. This included the belief that race and/or gender did not prohibit anyone from rational thought (Wion, 2015). "Though there were multiple things Louisa

gained from transcendentalism, one of the most important was her beliefs on women's rights and women's roles" (Wion, 2015. p. 15).

Louisa's fascination with Thoreau began when she was a young child. Thoreau would often visit the Alcott home. Louisa was entranced by his connection to nature. Thoreau educated Louisa in observation and nature and those lessons lasted a lifetime (Wion, 2015). Louisa also revered him as a man of kindness and honest character, something to which she strove her entire life.

Margaret Fuller was also a prominent figure in Transcendentalism who fought for women's rights. She believed that women were just as capable as men. Fuller argued that women needed education and a voice in the world.

> Fuller proved that women were capable of being the supporters of men and therefore should have just as much right as them. Not only was this right natural, it was owed them. These messages were not overlooked by a young and impressionable Louisa. (Wion, 2015, p. 17)

Fuller was unique and strong in her choice to select freedom and a voice over domesticity (Elbert, 1984). Louisa possessed this strength of character as well and found a way to fight for both domesticity and freedom in her life (Wion, 2015). Later on, Fuller did marry and have a child. In the end, Fuller found both her freedom and her family. Louisa also found some balance, though without marriage.

Another important transcendentalist to both Fuller and Louisa was Ralph Waldo Emerson. Emerson was a good friend of the Alcott family, many times serving as their benefactor by giving Bronson Alcott work, money and property (Reisen, 2009). Louisa was deeply influenced by Emerson's thoughts on love, self-reliance, and women's rights. "Emerson believed in the equality of the sexes and fought for freedom for women in terms of education" (Elbert, 1984. p. 41). Louisa used Emerson's philosophies and writing to plot out her own future.

Her own parents also influenced Louisa's early education. Her father, Bronson, had no formal education. Instead, he taught himself and lived his life based on John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (Gura, 2007). Bronson Alcott used Bunyan's novel as a life guide for himself and in the teaching of his four daughters about life. Bronson was creative and intelligent. However, his writing was poor and he had very little success translating his lofty ideas into workable realities. What success he did have was typically stopped either by bad luck or his inability to hold down a job (Wion, 2015). Although Louisa loved her father and recognized his creative and lofty ideas as admirable, she never ignored the fact that her father failed to support his family. So, eventually, Louisa began to take over his role as caretaker of the Alcotts (Wion, 2015). It could be that one of the reasons she did not fit traditional gender norms is because she had to take up her father's role in the family.

Louisa's mother, Abigail Alcott, was born into the wealthy May family. She had more advantages than most young girls and was allowed to pursue knowledge and education. However, as she grew to adulthood, she was expected to stay inside the home and complete her gendered chores (Elbert, 1984). This influenced her choice to accept the sexual division of labor in and around the home. But, "she also believed that women should command men's respect for women's rights in her own sphere" (Elbert, 1984, p, 52). Abigail believed she had a say in what happened to her house and to her family. She also believed she "had a right to be a part of intellectual conversations within her home as well" (Wion, 2015, p. 20). Furthermore, when the girls were still children, it often fell to her to work outside the home to provide for the family when her husband failed to do so. Even though Abigail took better care of her family than Bronson did, she was often ill. This is when Louisa would have to step up and take on many of the domestic responsibilities. Although Abigail tried her best, she was not able to run the household without help from Louisa. And so, it was through her mother that "Louisa learned to value the domestic sphere, but to still challenge the roles of women; it was through her parents that she observed non-traditional gender roles" (Wion, 2015, p. 21).

Work Outside the Home

"Work is such a beautiful & helpful thing & independence so delightful that I wonder [why] there are any lazy people in the world" (Alcott, 1872, p. 168). All her life, Louisa believed that work was required and that doing nothing was unacceptable. Perhaps because of her father's inability to support the family and her mother's frequent illnesses, it became her mandate to work in every job she could find in order to support her family.

While she loved writing and storytelling from a very young age, she couldn't rely on that to make her living at first. Consequently, she struggled to find her place in the working world where she often refused to fit into the cultural box expected of women of her day. Although women did work at this time, it was not the same for them as it was for men. Women went to work only if it was necessary. "When women did work, it was because for one reason or another, the men in the family could not provide support" (Stansell, 1987, p.12). For Louisa, it was easy to imagine taking on jobs traditionally assigned to men. However, it was not easy to find those jobs in the mid-1800s. Women were limited to certain professions and Louisa explored a great many of them. She was a seamstress, an actress, a governess, a teacher, a nurse, and finally a writer. It wasn't until she was able to support her family with her writing that she finally found her niche in the working world. However, all of her other jobs leading up to being a writer had profound effects on her view of work and the world in general.

Louisa's attempts to support her family started with the usual jobs for women. Stansell (1987) writes that when women did work outside the home, it was common for them to work as domestics and in other professions that were all extensions of the home. While Louisa did not particularly want to do these jobs (since she was already doing them in her own home), she is quoted as saying "I'll put my pride in my pocket and go out to service" (Alcott, 1873. p. 16). Louisa even attempted to be a teacher when her sister received another job and needed a replacement. Teaching did not suit her at all because it simply was not what she wanted to do.

When the Civil War started, Louisa wrote in one of her journals "I've often longed to see a war, and now I have my wish. I long to be a man, but as I can't fight, I will content myself working for those who can' (Alcott et al. 1989. p. 90). She was an avid abolitionist and a big supporter of the Union and felt her services could be used as a nurse to the men who were fighting. She assumed this role very well and when she wrote about it in her journal, her letters home, and her fictional retelling of her experiences she was honing her skills as the writer she would become. She published an account of her time as a nurse that did indeed bring her success as a writer. This book *Hospital Sketches* (1863) was a fictional story of a nurse who is ministering to Union soldiers. There is no doubt that this book was semi-autobiographical in its origin. Louisa's account of nursing life allowed the public to see secondhand what the war and what a hospital were like at that time. *Hospital Sketches* was met with great enthusiasm. "Louisa had shown the true reality of a Union hospital" (Wion, 2015, p. 33). It was realistic fiction of its day.

After she had to leave the battlefield hospital because of ill health, she returned home to recuperate and reflect on what she would now do to support her family. Although she thought working was the only way to truly have a successful life, she was frustrated with her jobs and was searching for more (Wion, 2015). She wrote in her journal saying, "I am trying to turn my brains into money by stories." (Alcott et al, 1987, p. 14). After the success of *Hospital Sketches*, she began to believe that writing could be her way to support her family.

Alcott started out by writing lurid sensational stories, publishing these stories under the name A.M. Barnard. These stories supplied her with the money to support her family before she achieved financial literary success. "In 1863, Louisa wrote her first thriller and continued to turn out lurid stories in exchange for a solid income" (Wion, 2015, p. 36). In many of her thrillers, she wrote about women who were "devious, temperamental, manipulative and even diabolical" (Wion, 2015, p.37). This could have been because she could not herself step out of the boundaries she was limited to because of her gender. Through her

characters, she was able to vicariously live the life she sometimes wished she could have.

In contrast, in the literature published under her own name, like *Little Women*, her characters did their duty, got married, had children and were respectful and respectable women. Although these characters often pushed their boundaries, in the end they found their way to the perfect 19th century view of women.

> A.M. Barnard could write about women who did not have to fit into these roles and could even be the villain in the story. While these characters were not limited by their gender, Louisa was, which is why she used a pseudonym to publish stories. A.M. Barnard supplied the Alcott family with financial support, but these were not the stories that brought Louisa literary fame. (Wion, 2015. p. 38)

It was in 1867 that Thomas Niles of Robert Brother's Publishing requested that Louisa write a book about girls. She needed the money so she got to work. She was not excited about writing the book, so chose to draw upon her experiences with her own 3 sisters. Many have said that *Little Women* is indeed semi-autobiographical and that the character Jo is the embodiment of Louisa herself. Originally the book was published in two parts. After the success of Part I in 1868, Louisa gained some excitement for her work. She began work on Part II and finished it very quickly, publishing it in 1869. With the publication of *Little Women*, Louisa had finally succeeded as an author and truly was the breadwinner of the Alcott family.

Stepping Outside of Gender Barriers

Louisa May Alcott spent her whole life questioning the normative gender roles for women. Even as a young child, she never quite fit into the expected norms for little girls. She stated of her childhood "no boy could be a friend till I had beaten him in a race, and no girl if she refused to climb trees, leap fences, and be a tomboy" (Cheney, 1889, p. 30). She was a wild and free spirit who did not follow traditional gender roles. She liked nothing more than playing boy's games and wanted to do boy's work and have boy's manners.

As her home education continued among intellectuals and transcendentalists, her philosophies concerning women's rights continued to grow. These ideas about blurred gender roles were further developed when she saw her mother having to take over the leadership of the household when her father could not or would not be the patriarch of the family.

When Louisa became old enough to help her mother by taking on all types of jobs, she continued to face gendered struggles. She wanted to have the independence that would have been hers if she had been a boy. In her novel *Work: A Story of Experience* (1873), her main character, a young lady named Christie

states her position that is directly from the mind of Alcott as she struggled to find suitable work. "I'm old enough to take care of myself; and if I'd been a boy, I should have been told to do it long ago. I hate to be dependent; and now there is no need of it, I can't bear it" (Alcott, 1977, p. 2).

In her own life, Louisa wanted independence so she could help support her family. In order to do that, she had to go to work outside the home. She held many domestic jobs, which she absolutely hated, and when she tried to find other jobs that interested her more, she found a woeful lack of opportunities and jobs for women. When she did finally find some success with her writing career, she tried to support women in every way she could.

Louise fought hard for women's rights to be independent and even to vote. She understood that women were caught between two worlds when they worked outside the home: they wanted to have a life in the public, but they also wanted to make sure their families and their homes were well taken care of. Louisa herself felt this tension most of her life. Although she left home for work, she would also keep a close eye on her responsibilities to her family's financial and emotional needs. Throughout her adult life she remained burdened by the need to provide for her family. In this way, Louisa became the matriarch, and in many ways, the patriarch of the family, fulfilling her parents' roles and establishing stability for the Alcotts. This is why she knew women were capable of so much more than they were given (Wion, 2015).

Her Choice to Remain Single

"For most women at the time, marriage was the ultimate goal. Some women, who were fighting for their independence in the public sphere, were searching for a life without marriage" (Gorsky, 1992, p. 19). Louisa found herself in the group of women who wanted a life without marriage. It was the last thing she wanted. She saw marriage as "another string that held back her freedom and independence" (Wion, 2015, p. 43).

Even though Louisa remained committed to supporting her family and did believe that women had a responsibility for taking care of the home, she advocated for a life outside the home and chose to remain single her whole life. This does not mean, however, that she did not have to take on the roles of a married woman at times. In fact, when her sister, May, died, Louisa gained custody of her niece, Lulu. Caring for Lulu required that Louisa develop her motherly instincts in order to meet her needs as a young woman.

Louisa was not just a mother to her inherited niece; she also became a second mother to her nephews. Her older sister, Anna, lost her husband in 1870. Louisa stepped into his place to help care for her nephews. This is when she began to see herself as a father figure to the nephews. As Louisa and Anna adapted to the

shared responsibilities of caring for Lulu and the two boys, they began to take different roles. Anna took on the role of mother to all three because Louisa was often gone from the home to write or take care of other business. Louisa stepped outside of the gender roles and fathered the children being responsible for their discipline and financial support. Lulu reported in an interview with Madelon Bedell in her later years "I respected Aunt Louisa but I loved my Darling Aunt Anna" (Bedell, 1980).

When writing her family stories, she did have to forfeit some of her beliefs in order to meet the market demand and sell the books. The vast majority of her characters ended up married and attuned to their roles as keepers of the home. Yet even though Louisa had to follow these guidelines, she did it on her own terms (Wion, 2015). In one of her books entitled *Work* (1873), she writes of the main character, Christie:

> Women who stand alone in the world, and have their own way to make, have a better chance to know men truly than those who sit safe at home and only see one side of mankind. We lose something; but I think we gain a great deal that is more valuable than admiration, flattery, and superficial service most men give to our sex. (Alcott, 1873, p. 268)

Through this character, Christie, Louisa puts forth a belief that women needed to learn how to stand on their own. She believed this allowed them to develop better relationships with men. In this way, she is highlighting the concept that independence is more important than marriage. In *Little Women*, she quoted Marmee as saying: "Right, Jo, better be happy old maids than unhappy wives, or un-maidenly girls, running about to find husbands" (Alcott, 2004, p. 84). This reflects Louisa's belief that women should not sit back and wait for love, and to be content if it never comes. Jo, Louisa's counterpart in *Little Women*, puts it this way: "An old maid-that's what I'm to be. A literary spinster, with a pen for a spouse, a family of stories for children…" (Alcott, 2004, p, 342).

In Part I of *Little Women*, Louisa never saw Jo as the marrying type, but her readers had a different idea. She wrote in her journal: "girls write to ask who the little women marry, as if that was the only end and aim of a woman's life" (Alcott et al, 1989, p.167). Most thought Jo should marry Laurie, the next-door neighbor. But while Louisa did give in and have Jo get married at the end of Part II, it was not to Laurie. Instead it was an unconventional love for a professor who challenged her intellectually and encouraged her to follow her own goals and dreams.

More than a Little Woman

When you take the time to really study the life of Louisa May Alcott, you cannot help but be amazed at the multifaceted roles and responsibilities she had to fulfill. Instead of giving in to the gendered boundaries that were placed on

women of her time, she questioned them and found her own way of meeting those boundaries. She did support a woman's role in the home, but saw so much more that the woman could do to support her family. She did not believe that a woman had to get married to fulfill her role in society. In fact, she believed that staying single gave her more rights in society because she would not have a husband to overshadow her in the public sphere. At the same time, in order to sell books many times she had to give her characters a traditional role of wife or mother. However, she put her own twist on those characters by often giving her heroines unconventional partners. Louisa broke through the cultural norm that men had to be the financial provider for the family by taking over that role and becoming the patriarch of her family. Starting at an early age with the many transcendental philosophers who influenced her education, she fought for the rights of all women, all people and took many steps to surpass the cultural lines that tried to limit the opportunities available to women and other marginalized populations in the United States. Louisa May Alcott truly was more than a little woman!! ***LEJ***

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From Comic Books to Graphic Novels
Ways to Help Students Learn to Read

By Lauren Wellen and Edgar Ramos

Background

In 2018, the International Literacy Association (ILA) launched a new initiative, *Children's Rights to Read*, which aimed at "ensuring every child has access to the education, opportunities, and resources needed to read" (O'Donnell, 2019, para. 1). With the Initiative, ten rights were identified that children have regarding reading. One of the rights that children have is the right to choose what they read. In order to teach subject material, educators mainly decide on what the students will be reading. For some students this works, and they can learn the content. But there are also students who find that what they are reading is not interesting, or it could even be too difficult for them to understand. The President of the Board of Directors of ILA and of this initiative, Bernadette Dwyer (cited in press release by O'Donnell, 2018, para. 7) stated, "Teaching children to read opens up a world of possibilities, builds their capacity for creative and critical thinking, expands their knowledge base and develops their ability to respond with empathy and compassion to others." These are characteristics that students need to be successful in school. In order to understand why this initiative is important and how children can make choices in school to help them read, an examination of key well-known researchers who support literacy development are discussed in this article.

Jeanne Chall (1983), educational psychologist, writer, and literacy researcher, described stages of reading development that start when an adult reads to the young child. These stages begin with *Stage 0*, which involves pre-reading from six months to six years of age, and they continue through to *Stage 5*, known as 'Construction to Reconstruction—A World View,' and this stage encompasses college students from age 18 and above. In a perfect world, Chall's stages are effective as students advance through the stages, and the students follow a pattern of learning to read which evolves from having learning experiences that teach phonological awareness or the sounds of language, to learning the letter-sound relationship and decoding or phonics, which advances the student's reading development to comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, and all aspects that are needed to be a good reader. But what happens if students do not follow these

stages and begin to struggle with their reading and understanding? Could other factors impact the reason that students struggle?

Another researcher whose work is well known in the literacy world and who focuses on another aspect of learning to read is Shirley Brice Heath. Her book, *Ways with Words* (1983) summarizes her long-term research. From 1969 to 1978, Shirley Brice Heath, anthropologist and linguist, conducted a well-known study where she examined the language and practices of preschool children in two communities and how they learned to read and write. She explored the language in their homes and in their environments. She found that the language expectations of the schools and the environment were different from the values and expectations of what had happened in their homes. She argued that the "place of language in the cultural life of each social group is interdependent with the habits and values of behaving shared among members of that group" (p. 11). Family structures, religious groups, and concepts of childhood formed these values. From this study, educators have learned that culture and what occurs in the students' home and community environments have an impact on students' learning to read.

While teachers are choosing what the students will read, they are also teaching to meet standards from the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) known as the Common Core Standards, which replaced No Child Left Behind (2002). Teachers implement strategies to meet standards, and at the same time are educating students in the foundational aspects of literacy, along with other content areas in the curriculum. Incorporating both strategies and foundational basics of literacy has required teachers to work diligently to meet the learning needs of the students in their classrooms. Students arrive in classrooms with a diversity of experiences, knowledge, cultures, and learning styles.

Between the years of 2000 and 2001, the greatest population to increase were Hispanics, which increased by 43%, over half of the increase in the United States (Ennis et al, as cited by Bredekamp, 2017). By knowing these statistics and looking at the ILA *Children's Rights to Read*, educators can see that students with dual languages and learning challenges would benefit from reading a variety of texts to help them understand what they are learning. One type of book format that students with challenges in reading have discovered and actually read is called the graphic novel. So, why do graphic novels hook the students and motivate them to read?

According to Smith & Pole (2018), there has been a stigma with reading graphic formats, or comics, but this format has still persisted. In Ranker's (2007) article about *Using Comic Books as Read-Alouds*, one reason that graphic novels encourage reading is that they rely on visual processing, which has gained a much more in-depth attention with the changing interest in pop culture, including

superhero movies and video games. With graphic novels as a popular choice of format, this article will discuss its importance and use. Edgar, one of the authors, has learned to read through comic books and discusses the benefits of allowing students to select graphic novels as a way to gain valuable literacy skills as they choose what they read.

Motivation to Read

Students who struggle are usually behind in their reading, and they lack motivation to succeed. Erik Erikson's seminal work, *Childhood and Society* presented his Theory of Psychosocial Development. Erikson called the stages of personal and social development that individuals confront in major parts of their lives a 'crisis' (as cited by Bredekamp, 2017). In Stage 4, labeled as *Industry versus Inferiority*, Erikson stated that if students want to do the work, they will continue to work hard. This hard work he called *Industry*. If somewhere or somehow students lack the skills or have been told they cannot do the work, they are on the opposite side, in what Erikson called *Inferiority*. "When children's accomplishments are not up to their standards, they develop a sense of inferiority" (Bredekamp, 2017, p. 110).

In Hedges & Gage's (2014), study, *The Relationship of Reading Motivation and Self-Efficacy to Reading Achievement*, they examined the reading achievement of middle-grade suburban students. One of their conclusions was that reading self-efficacy is a critical area of how "a child perceives her or his reading performance to compare with the performance of classmates" (p. 472). According to Bandura (1994), "Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave" (p. 71).

When Lauren was teaching the practicum course for the Master of Arts in Reading Program, each graduate student was assigned a small group of children through which to discover the students' reading levels and learning deficiencies as they assessed, remediated, and found interventions that would lead to success. The first part of the assessments was to determine the students' interest in reading topics with the assessment, *Tell Me What You Like!* (McKenna & Stahl, 2015). In addition, the graduate students were required to study how students self-perceive their feelings about reading by using the *Elementary Reading Attitude Survey* (McKenna & Kear, 1990). These two instruments helped the graduate students direct the children to the books of interest to them, while working on strategies and interventions to help them through their reading difficulties.

For the graduate students this was the beginning of working with the students. Anstey & Bull (2006) have stated,

> The starting point is always the person's personal literacy identity: the sum of the total of what he or she already knows and can do. Therefore, it is critical that teachers show students how to know and use their literacy identities. (p. 35)

Basically, literacy identity is what makes up the students' life. It includes their social world, their cultural world, and their school-based world. Where these three intersect is the student's literacy identity. Knowing this literacy identity helps teachers know how to meet the students' learning needs. The graduate students were doing this search for children's learning identity in the Practicum course. They learned about the students' identities so that they could provide the best instruction considering the students' interests.

One Learner's Story

If Heath's research provided information about how students learn to read from their environmental experiences, what happens at home can set the stage for future learning and reading in school. Bredekamp (2017) stated, "All children can come to appreciate books and find that reading is enjoyable, especially if they are exposed to books at an early age" (p. 400). While she is referring to books, this can apply to all types of reading formats.

The following is a story of self-reflection, learning and excitement. It is a story of adapting, identity, and reading. A story of how Edgar learned to read, write, and speak English though comics. What follows is Edgar Ramos' story.

> *Growing up on the south side of Chicago in the Pilsen/Little Village area, the use of English was not necessarily essential. The area is a predominately Latino neighborhood, with many families having immigrated to the United States from Mexico, my parents being no exception. While my parents spoke some English, Spanish was the predominately-spoken language at home. I recall my father always saying; "You learn English at school and Spanish at home." Looking back, I learned English more so at home than the other way around.*
>
> *While I can begin to describe the entire the process and underlying psychological process that occurred in my journey toward English acquisition, the journey really begins with two exact moments in my life. The first was while living in Dolton, Georgia as a second grader, and the second was when I found comic books.*
>
> *In Georgia, I was enrolled in what was referred to as a bilingual program for students. The actual name of the program was the "children of migrant workers" program. Second grade in a new school and a new area was not easy. It brought with it its own trials and tribulations, not to mention emotional impacts. More importantly, it sparked in me what I call a life-changing experience. I recall coming home the last day of school with my report card and seeing the look in my parents' eyes. The next thing I recall is my mother*

and my brother, who is four years older than I, speaking to my second-grade teacher. They were not happy and my mother spoke in the best way possible, trying to communicate her dismay in a language she had not mastered, while my brother was painstakingly trying to relay her message in English. She could not understand why. Why, had I failed second grade? I was not promoted to the next grade because it was assessed that I did not have the required English skills to pass into third grade. I was confused, ashamed, hurt, and angered. I couldn't understand my emotions, my reasoning, or my confusion. I thought I was normal in the way I spoke English. I never knew my English was not good enough. But, then again, I had no point of comparison.

I repeated the second grade in Georgia and, interestingly enough, I excelled the second time. I was generally at the top of my class when it came to assignments and my speediness of completing them. My second-grade teacher for this second experience was inspiring and motivating, always giving me time and encouragement. My memories of her are fond.

We moved back to Chicago to an area similar to where we had previously lived. I was scared and mad, afraid that I would fail again. My parents didn't have the mastery of the language to help or to foster a more thorough knowledge of the language, but they did provide a drive and motivation to learn it. I just needed a way to know how.

Early on upon our move back, I recall looking at the back of a cereal box. It had a special promotional offer of sending in box tops and, for a small shipping and handling fee, I would receive four of the five listed comics they offered. I was intrigued and excited. I had watched some of comics on television while I was growing up. In fact, my father had always watched them with me and would recognize them and talk about them with me. I wanted those comics. I wish I could say that I ordered them to learn to read, to help me understand, but they only pleased my curiosity visually and emotionally. They were an escape from my fear, an escape to a fantasy world where I could dream of being a superhero.

Needless to say, I ordered them, and a short six to eight weeks later they arrived at my home. I opened them up with the ravenous appetite of a starved person. I happened to pick one of the comics that intrigued me by its cover. It was Captain America and Captain Britain on the cover. I opened it and read it. I read it again. Over and over, I read it until I made sense of what it was saying. It was nothing short of amazing. It had pictures with the words. I could make sense of the story without always knowing what the words said. The pictures themselves told some of the story or made the story easier to follow. Just looking at the pictures, I had a small understanding of what was being conveyed. The words made it clearer. I would ask whomever I could, "What does this word mean?" I was hooked. I began to order more and more specifically Captain America comics. He inspired me with his level

of heroism, his caring for others, and his dedication to a better world. He gave me hope. He had no true super powers, or should I say his powers were what I had seen as achievable. He was strong, but not super strong. He was smart, but not super smart. He was a leader, a master tactician. He was the closest to a real person whom I could dream of being.

From this time forward, reading became fun and motivating, and I hungered for it. It created images in my mind of hope, dreams, and fantasy. It inspired creativity and motivation, and, ultimately, it just inspired me. Captain America not only laid the foundations of my reading and understanding English. He gave me identity of culture. I learned to be American. He fought for justice for all, equitable in his struggle for good. He followed orders, but broke rules only when there was an injustice to those who could not speak or fight for themselves. I was emotionally hooked on these comics. I learned to read!

How Edgar's Story Relates to Schooling Today

Comic books have been around for many years. The very first comic book is *'Histoire De Mr. Vieux Bois'* (1837) by Rodolphe Töpffer. Rodolphe Töpffer was a Swiss Cartoonist, and is credited as the creator of the first comic book. The book was later printed in English and was released in the United States in 1841–1842 with the title *'The Adventures of Obadiah Oldbuck'* (Terrero, 2018). Fast-forwarding, Smith and Pole (2018) in their article for the International Literacy Association, *What's Going On in a Graphic Novel?*, stated that in the 1950s in the United States, comic books were considered to cause juvenile delinquency, but the graphic format persisted. Smith and Pole continued,

> The graphic novel is also one of the fastest growing book formats. … Graphic novels and comics are compared with picture books because both types of texts incorporate words and illustrations, a variety of genre, and a range of intended audiences. An obvious difference between picture books and graphic formats is the paneled layout and visual text features, such as speech or thought balloons found in graphic novels and comics. (p. 169)

According to the National Coalition against Censorship, the American Library Association and the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund (Smith & Pole, 2018), "graphic novels are more sophisticated than comics and have a greater variety of content" (p. 169). They continued, "we were intrigued when the graphic novel *El Deafo* by Cece Bell (2014) appeared as a 2015 Newberry Honor Book" (p. 169). As a result, educators are beginning to make them a part of libraries and students are reading them for their content.

The Value of Learning Visually from Graphic Novels

Visual integration and learning have long been researched and studied in various fields, from various perspectives. Researchers in the fields of psychology, literacy, linguistics and sociology, to name a few, have studied various aspects of visual processing (Yu, 2012). While understanding visual perception goes beyond the scope of this article, it must be noted that visual processing, visual, spatial, or fluid reasoning are not the same, nor can they be measured in the same ways. For the purposes of this article, visual perception will be understood as a combination of the aforementioned list. Yu (2012) defines it as

> … an ability to process and organize visual information; it plays a role in identifying and classifying information. Many physiological and psychological factors can have an impact on the depth of visual perception in terms of categorization and interpretation of meaning. (p. 292)

Visual processing is essentially the way to process visual data. It's the way that people see the world, how it is categorized and identified into select areas of thought and practice.

Psychologists have diagnostic tools to measure how well this can be completed with respect to visual, spatial, and fluid reasoning indices, and identify possible areas that may be impaired or deficient in various domains (Wechsler, 2008). Tools such as The Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale, fifth edition (WAIS V) and its corresponding adolescent and child versions demonstrate the manner in which to assess for those abilities. Moreover, they demonstrate how processes interconnect with items such as memory, and how underlying disorders such as depression, anxiety, and/or Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) (Weschler, 2008) impact them. Information is impacted not only by our emotions (physiological responses to external stimuli) but how they are perceived (our interpretations of our emotions) (Schachter & Singer, 1962). Much research has demonstrated links between emotions and perceptions and their effects (Piaget & Inhelder, 2000; Perry, 2006). Simply put, how a person feels, whether sad, or happy, or nervous etc. impacts not only what is observed, but also what is understood. The ultimate result is a guide to responses of what is visually processed. Included with visual processing and perceptions are emotions and feelings, intelligence, culture, ethnicity, and personality and all their underlying complexities, and ultimately an understanding of what is seen and felt (Hillman, 1993, cited in Yu, 2012; Messaris, 1994; Piaget & Inhelder, 2000). Yus (2008) stated,

> Inference plays a more important role in the apprehension of visual information than it appears to play. Perception is not as automatic as it seems to be, but is always mediated by the person's background

knowledge, expectations and assumptions about the world (actual or possible) within which images are processed. (p. 5)

The following is an example of a real case and how Edgar, a psychologist, would counsel and explain the case.

Let's assume there is a teen that is 13 years old. For the most part, the teen is an average-intelligence child but has the unfortunate situation of having been diagnosed with depression. So, the child has normal intelligence but is diagnostically depressed and attempting to read and retain the information. What can the problem be? If a person feels sad and thinks negatively about the world, similarly to depression, then the words in text and their context are processed under a negative lens. Understandably there is a much more complex neuropsychological process but as a point of understanding simply, if a person is sad and negative, what that person absorbs will be viewed and understood from that perspective. So, why would someone want to read when the world is bad? This is how it seemed me before discovering comics. This is how it seems to the depressed teen. There are cognitive effects that depression has on a person that can materialize into bad memories, poor concentration, and attention problems, which would normally prevent reading and doing the work.

Teachers have to find a way to help and motivate the student into learning and reading. Smith & Pole (2018) summarize their article,

Our research leads us to advocate for instruction in reading graphic formats so all students have access to the depth of meaning carried in the intersection of written language and graphics, as well as to encourage teachers who use graphic novels in their classroom to explore reading a graphic novel deeply and learn strategies that support comprehension in a multimodal format. (p. 176)

Basically, teachers must teach how graphic novels demonstrate the information visually. With this accomplished, students will comprehend what they are reading.

Benefits of Reading Graphic Novels for All Students

There are many benefits to reading graphic novels. One as mentioned is comprehension, but another, a key to encouraging reading and learning, is motivation. Motivated readers are defined as "engaged, curious, and anxious to talk about what they are reading. They are able to read from several texts at the same time, look forward to new challenges and value text choice and time to engage with print" (Marinak et al., 2010, p. 503).

Kyle Redford's (n.d.), article from Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity stated,

Additionally, in class discussions, the graphic novel's easy-to-read accessible format allows struggling readers into the world of classic

> literary references that would otherwise be accessible only to stronger readers. Graphic novels are a wonderful way to help dyslexic readers strengthen their vocabulary, build their reading confidence, and foster a love of story. (para. 4)

He also stated in the same article,

> The brilliant thing about the graphic novel is the way they offer dyslexic readers several different cues to the story. If a reader gets snagged on the vocabulary or storyline of a graphic novel, illustrated pages offer contextual cues to help decipher meaning. But don't be fooled; strong readers love the graphic novel as well. The attraction can be likely be explained by the enjoyable format. (para. 3)

Graphic novels not only help struggling readers, but good readers enjoy the illustrations and cues that help to understand the storyline.

Another benefit to having students read graphic novels is that it helps the students gain a broader vocabulary, to appreciate and enjoy reading. CeCe Bell (n.d.), the author of the graphic novel, *El Deafo*, stated in an article on struggling and reluctant reader in *Reading Rockets,* a national public initiative used by educators,

> But there was like this sense of satisfaction for readers who maybe have a little bit of difficulty reading. Here are these pictures that help propel me through. It doesn't take very long to get through a page. Suddenly you read a 220-page book, and you've never read a 220-page book in your life. It's like this gateway to reading maybe things that are more difficult down the road… Graphic novels can introduce struggling readers to the world of classic literature. Classical Comics and Graphic Classics, for example, publish graphic novel versions of Dickens, Shakespeare, Twain, Alcott, and other great writers. (para. 5-7)

Bell is a deaf person, and she chose to write her semi-autobiography as a graphic novel, telling her story through a rabbit that shares how she balanced her life experiences.

Graphic novels benefit all students. According to Fisher & Frey (2013), graphic novels help students gain valuable literacy skills, such as previewing content, summarizing information, visualizing, reviewing, and analyzing texts. As McTaggert indicated, "[Graphic novels] enable the struggling reader, motivate the reluctant one, and challenge the high-level learner" (as cited in Fisher & Frey, p. 32).

Conclusion

This article discovered the history of comics and how students read graphic novels, which in graphic format are similar to comics. The story of Edgar's life and how he learned to read by reading comics proves the value of this reading

format, especially for struggling readers. With the benefits that students can gain from reading graphic novels, all students should be encouraged to read them whether it is for learning or pleasure.

In a Graphic Novel Roundtable, presented by Jennifer Gonzales, a practitioner, there were four teachers who shared their thoughts about using graphic novels in the classroom. Dr. Michelle Falter, a professor at North Carolina State University, was one of the members of the roundtable. She summed up the main reasons for using graphic novels.

> It is easier for students to relate to a text when they can see it. It captures student interest in this increasingly visual world, which then also increases student motivation and desire to keep reading because they can be successful at it, therefore promoting a positive association to reading. Finally, graphic novels are cross curricular; there are many connections that can be made across the curriculum in a variety of different subject matters. (Falter, as cited by Gonzales, 2016)

Regardless of whether students are reading from a book or from a digital copy, the ability to understand the content opens the door to what is being taught in the classroom. Graphic novels can be used in every discipline. By placing these materials in the hands of the students, it will provide them with the opportunities to analyze the information and become critical thinkers in the 21st century. ***LEJ***

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Meeting the Literacy Needs of Adolescent Readers

By Jenna Nelson

Struggling Adolescent Readers in the Middle Grades

Within the United States (US), the middle-grades level encompasses grades 5-8. As students move from the elementary level into the middle grades, they encounter more complex forms of literature, which require well-developed literacy skills with which to interact with these materials. In these grade levels, classroom instruction moves away from the one-classroom elementary model to subject-specific classrooms (i.e., English Language Arts, social studies, mathematics, and science).

Starting in fourth grade, students begin regularly interacting with grade-level texts. This shift in school literature becomes further complex as students move into the middle grades. Discipline-specific literature is more complex and requires strong literacy skills for successful interaction with the material as students are now regularly decoding words, analyzing literature for underlying meaning, and engaging with academic language. If student literacy skills are not well-developed, particularly in the areas of reading fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension, struggling adolescent readers face immense challenges with engaging with the material and interacting with it on a deeper level. When students are unable to understand complex texts, their learning is hindered as they are not able to successfully access the course reading and content or read for understanding (Clemens, Simmons, Simmons, Wang, & Kwok, 2017).

Additionally, once students are in the middle grades, content-area teachers have traditionally been unprepared to support student literacy development, as it is expected that adolescents ought to have mastery of foundational literacy skills related to vocabulary, reading fluency, and reading comprehension. Historically, middle-grades teachers have not viewed the development of these foundational literacy skills as instructional priorities within their content area (Clemens et al., 2017; Meltzer, Smith, & Clark, 2002). Although this is the case, the reality is that these skills are essential to student success in reading and content-area performance.

Adolescent Literacy Performance

Literacy skills in reading fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension

are fundamental skills that students are believed to have mastered through their learning at the elementary level and reading instruction is not considered as a responsibility of secondary teachers (Clements et al., 2017; Meltzer et al., 2002). This perceived understanding is, unfortunately, incorrect. Rather, many adolescents leave the elementary level without strong foundational skills in these fundamental literacy skills. In the most recent study on reading performance conducted by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in 2017, NAEP (2017) found that 24% of eighth-graders in the US have not mastered fundamental literacy skills. This study consists of data from both public and private schools across the nation. According to Rasinski (2017), students who score below the *basic* level experience challenges with:

> locating relevant information, making simple inferences, and using their understanding of the text to identify details that support a given interpretation or conclusion. They also experience difficulty in interpreting the meaning of words as they are used in the text. (Rasinski, 2017, p. 519)

Ultimately, students scoring below the basic level have challenges with reading comprehension.

These literacy struggles are further specified and considered in a study conducted by Clemens, Simmons, Simmons, Wang, and Kwok (2017). In their research on the prevalence of reading fluency and vocabulary difficulties of struggling adolescent readers (grades six through eight) on reading comprehension, they found that 96% of student participants exhibited deficits in reading fluency and/or vocabulary as they, on average, scored below average in their performance on several literacy assessments. These are the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test, Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation, Gray Oral Reading Test, and Passage Reading Fluency. From the results of this study, the researchers found that 20% of the students in their study could be identified as struggling readers. The researchers indicated that 57% of struggling readers possessed combined difficulties in fluency and vocabulary. Additionally, they found that 80% of the struggling readers possessed fluency difficulties, with or without difficulties with vocabulary (Clemens et al., 2017). From these results, the authors posit that "for most struggling adolescent readers, problems in understanding text may be rooted in insufficient knowledge and skills that are needed to read text efficiently and free the cognitive resources to permit higher order processing, connect ideas, infer meaning, and draw conclusions" (Clemens et al., 2017, p. 793). The findings from this research indicate that struggling adolescent readers lack foundational skills in reading fluency and vocabulary, making it challenging for them to comprehend course literature and to fully engage with course material.

Similarly, Cirino, et al., (2013) conducted a study on reading skill deficits

in struggling adolescent readers. They found that reading fluency, vocabulary skills, and reading comprehension are correlated and impact student ability to comprehend literature. In the study, they examined the difficulties that 1,748 sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade students had in decoding, reading fluency, and reading comprehension. Through their study, they found that their participants who had struggles with comprehending also, most predominantly, had difficulties with decoding and fluency (Cirino et al., 2013).

It is evident that struggling adolescent readers are in need of support in vocabulary, reading fluency, and reading comprehension to be able to successfully engage with the increasingly difficult course content at the middle-grades level. Through focusing on these areas, teachers can support student literacy development and help learners at this level find academic success. The middle grades present an opportunity for students to develop these literacy skills prior to entering high school when discipline-specific reading becomes increasingly complex.

Content Area Literacy

As student learning becomes content-specific, the literature that students engage with becomes more complex while they progress through the grade levels. With a disciplinary curriculum, students must develop complex, discipline-specific literacy skills and understandings to engage with the course material (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2012; Fang & Schleppegrell, 2010; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008). Unfortunately, even if adolescent readers know strategic reading strategies, many students struggle with how to employ their knowledge of these strategies to a specific content area. At the same time, content-area teachers are typically not prepared to support struggling readers with the literacy needs in their classrooms (Clemens et al., 2017).

At the middle-grades level, an understanding of technical literacy skills that are discipline-specific is necessary for learners to develop in order to move away from generalizable literacy skills and strategies and develop discipline-specific literacy competencies (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008). Therefore, it is important for content-area teachers to foster student literacy. When student literacy is supported, students are able to engage with the material on a deeper level, enhancing their learning through purposeful interaction with the text. The move to deepening student learning in this manner becomes difficult, however, when learners have not mastered the foundational literacy skills of vocabulary, reading fluency, and reading comprehension.

Interrelated Skills for Improving Student Literacy

To improve the literacy of struggling adolescent readers, teachers should focus their instruction on vocabulary, reading fluency, and reading comprehension.

Focusing on these essential literacy skills allows for educators to provide their students with the literacy tools that will help them be successful in the classroom.

Vocabulary Development. Vocabulary knowledge is an essential building block for understanding the English language and comprehending text. Therefore, morphological knowledge must be developed in students in order to develop strong literacy skills. Under vocabulary, morphemes are the smallest units of meaning in the English language. In English, we have root words and affixes that, when combined, form words and express meaning. Student ability to understand the interactions between word parts and their ability to construct meaning from those parts are both essential to strong vocabulary knowledge and student reading comprehension. Vocabulary knowledge is important because reading comprehension can be impaired if students do not know the meaning of a word (Clemens et al., 2017; Goodwin, Petscher, Carlisle, & Mitchell, 2017; Swanson, Vaughn & Wexler, 2017).

Vocabulary instruction that is focused on developing the morphological knowledge of struggling adolescent readers has been found to be an effective strategy for advancing student literacy. Since struggling readers are likely to have more frustrating experiences in school trying to understand how written words work, "introducing morphology as an organized system that links words even when pronunciation shifts appear irregular […] may motivate struggling students to study words more closely" (Bowers, Kirby, & Deacon, 2010, p. 171). By studying morphological families of words, struggling adolescent readers will be exposed to advanced, complex vocabulary with the support of the connected words they do know. Through learning the structure and meaning connections of associated words, readers are able to build lexical representations, thus improving their vocabulary (Bowers, Kirby, & Deacon, 2010; Swanson et al., 2017).

At the middle-grades level, morphological knowledge is particularly important because students are working with complex, discipline-specific literature, requiring them to have academic language fluency. Academic language encompasses content-area words, or the language of schooling (Goodwin et al., 2017). Academic language is morphologically complex and typically consists of morphological relatives, making it essential for students to possess strong morphological knowledge (Goodwin et al., 2017). For struggling adolescent readers, it is important to focus on the development of academic language as knowledge of content-area words plays a vital role in reading comprehension. Through developing student morphological awareness, struggling adolescent readers will begin to better understand the complex academic language tied to their content-area courses and comprehend the discipline-specific literature of their various subject areas.

Reading Fluency. Reading fluency is another skill area of focus for improving the literacy of struggling adolescent readers because this skill is the bridge that connects vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension. Fluency is not typically viewed as an area for instructional focus in the middle grades because it is perceived that fluency ought to be mastered during elementary years of schooling (Rasinski, Rikli, & Johnston, 2009). Fluent reading and word identification skills are part of reading comprehension and allow for students to engage with the material more deeply (Clemens et al., 2017).

When developing reading fluency, educators should focus on automaticity and prosody. *Automaticity* is the rapid, effortless word recognition that develops through reading practice. Students' ability to automatically recognize and read a word is important because it allows them to focus on higher-order comprehension processes. *Prosody* is a fluent reader's ability to use pitch, stress, intonation, and timing to communicate meaning while they are reading. Prosody and reading comprehension are related because when reading fluency is weak, reading comprehension lags as prosody links reading fluency to comprehension (Rasinski, 2012).

Developing student reading fluency is important because it allows for students to read a text accurately and automatically with proper expression and emphasis. By improving student automaticity and prosody, struggling readers will be able to "comprehend a text at a more sophisticated level than only the text itself offers" (Rasinski, 2012, p. 519). As previously noted, fluency is the bridge between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension. It is necessary that adolescent learners develop strong reading-fluency skills to help them better understand and interact with discipline-specific content at the middle-grades level.

Reading Comprehension. Reading comprehension is a third skill that educators should focus on when developing the literacy of struggling adolescent readers. This skill allows students to navigate and understand the various texts they encounter, not only within their content-area coursework, but also throughout their lifetime. Reading comprehension is associated with readers' prior knowledge of the content, semantic knowledge, and the ability to pick out essential information, organize it, make inferences, and predict the consequence (Seok & DaCosta, 2014). At the secondary level, literacy demands become more complex, therefore student ability to comprehend the literature that they read requires sophisticated literacy skills (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008).

Vocabulary and reading fluency are two reading competencies that impact student reading comprehension (Rasinski, 2017; Duke, Pearson, Strachan, Billman, 2011; Clemens et al., 2017). Skilled adolescent readers are able to process the content they are reading through their ability to recognize words and read

them fluently. These learners are also able to better apply critical thinking skills to construct meaning from the literature they are reading (Duke et al., 2011). Duke et al. also note that skilled readers have "greater stores of knowledge, including language knowledge (e.g., vocabulary, or complex syntax, or grammar), textual knowledge (e.g., of text structures and textual devices), and word knowledge (e.g., disciplinary, interpersonal)" (p. 55). Through this knowledge, these readers are able to more easily engage with the literature on a deeper level. When students are not struggling to comprehend a text, they also become more motivated and engaged with the material as they are able to read more actively, helping learners better develop their knowledge and skills.

Conclusion

It is evident that vocabulary development, reading fluency, and reading comprehension are correlated and influence student ability to engage with course materials at the middle-grades level. Through developing student skills in these three areas, educators will help students navigate and understand the various texts they encounter—both in school and in the greater society. As seen on the NAEP (2017) reading performance results for eighth-grade learners, a significant population of learners in the US continue to struggle with literacy. Through actively working to develop their vocabulary, reading fluency, and reading comprehension, struggling adolescent readers can become well-equipped to engage with the discipline-specific content of their middle-grades and secondary coursework, ultimately helping these students thrive academically. ***LEJ***

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Community Engagement for Families with Children Diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder

The Every Family Program

By Arthur Safer, Mary C. Zaharis, Denise S. Glasgow, Susan L. Mann, and Michele Gnan

The number of children diagnosed with autism has increased substantially. Educators need to understand how to meet the individual learning needs for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in the school, home, and in the community. In order to better address their complex communication, social, and learning needs, school, family, and community members need to work together to create programs that can support specialized learning opportunities for students with ASD. The Audubon Nature Institute received grant funding for the *Every Family Program* to design and develop innovative programs in the New Orleans geographical area that supported families with children with autism spectrum disorders.

Overview

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a developmental disability that can cause significant social, communication, and behavioral challenges. Autism is not a single disorder, but a spectrum of closely-related disorders with a shared core of symptoms. People with ASD may not look different from other people, but may communicate, interact, behave, and learn in ways that are different from most other people. Individuals on the autism spectrum have problems to some degree with social skills, empathy, communication, and flexible behavior. However, the level of disability and the combination of symptoms varies tremendously from person to person. In fact, two children with the same diagnosis may look very different when it comes to their social, communication, and behavior abilities.

The number of children diagnosed with special learning needs is increasing at a tremendous rate. For example, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported 1:60,000 diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) in 1972 versus 1:59 diagnosed with ASD in 2013.

- Approximately 1 in 59 children has been identified with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) according to estimates from CDC's Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) Network.

- ASD is reported to occur in all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups. ASD is almost 4 times more common among boys (1 in 42) than among girls (1 in 189).
- About 1 in 6 children in the United States had a developmental disability in 2006-2008, ranging from mild disabilities such as speech and language impairments to serious developmental disabilities, such as intellectual disabilities, cerebral palsy, and autism (http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/data.html).

The autism spectrum disorders belong to an "umbrella" category of five childhood-onset conditions known as pervasive developmental disorders (PDD). Some autism specialists use the terms pervasive developmental disorder and autism spectrum disorder interchangeably. However, when most people talk about the autism spectrum disorders, they are referring to the three most common PDDs:

- Autism
- Asperger's Syndrome
- Pervasive Developmental Disorder - Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS)

Families with children that have special learning needs such as developmental disabilities, cognitive disabilities, or those on the autism spectrum are limited in the types of community "free choice" activities available to them. Free-choice learning activities may include museums, zoos, aquariums, nature centers, and parks. Often, these informal education centers are not equipped to provide programming for families because the education and guest-engagement teams lack the necessary experience, training, and/or resources to create meaningful programming for these learning-diverse audiences.

Many families and professionals in the field of special education cite a fundamental lack of family-appropriate recreational and learning opportunities for this audience. Children with autism-spectrum disorder tend to have fewer recreation and leisure interests than others. A typical example of the lack of meaningful community programming available for families with children that have ASD is an anecdotal comment by a parent who reported that the educators asked if they should just bring coloring books for the participants.

A number of museums are beginning to provide creative programs for families facing these challenges. Some children's museums open early to offer a quieter, less crowded experience for these children and their families, or offer a summer art camp for children with special needs. Others carefully monitor the building temperature or adjust the lighting in some areas to create a more sensory-friendly environment. Museums also utilize multiple learning styles, creating visual representations of what visitors can expect to see and do, in

order to help parents prepare their child and to minimize unfamiliar and unexpected experiences.

Access to museums, zoos, aquariums, and nature centers for individuals and families diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders not only fits the mission and philosophy of the organization but also meets the mandate of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The informal setting and casual environment of these venues promotes a safe place for visual and interactive learning through hands-on learning experiences. Since the decision for including members of the ASD community in the activities of museums, zoos, aquariums, and nature centers is relatively new and unique, it requires that these organizations have in-house professionals who have the skills and knowledge to provide families with new learning avenues. Institutions that have been successful in welcoming the autistic community have an established a set of training protocols for its professional staff through added resource tools for working with this special population. It is incumbent upon each venue to acknowledge that programs and exhibits may need to be modified to create an autism-friendly environment.

To engage and support through innovative educational programming for families whose children have been diagnosed with autism-spectrum disorders, the Audubon Nature Institute in New Orleans, Louisiana received grant funding from a private foundation in 2016 to design and implement the *Every Family Program*. The Audubon Nature Institute is a 501(c) 3 not-for-profit entity that operates ten museums and parks dedicated to nature. The Audubon Nature Institute strives to reach all members of its community and inspire them to appreciate nature in a personalized way. The addition of the *Every Family Program* permitted the Audubon to be truly all-inclusive in providing additional free-choice activities for individuals with special learning needs through specialized educational programming with the Institute's educational staff.

Statistics noted that potentially one in every 15 families in the Greater New Orleans area could benefit from the *Every Family Program*. The Audubon Nature Institute *Every Family Program* was designed to pilot a project to create targeted, cutting-edge innovative programming for families whose members were diagnosed with ASD to participate in specialized recreation programs where they would feel comfortable and not be afraid of disrupting the general public. The *Every Family Program* established an advanced reality of engagement for families with ASD beyond the traditional free-choice activities. Additional innovations included a set of pilot training strategies linking nature-based programming with the extension to the special learning needs demographic.

All selected Audubon education staff participated in workshops designed to introduce the various complex issues and considerations in working with people with special learning needs. The Audubon Nature Institute's Education

Department developed five programs at each public facility (Aquarium, Zoo, and Butterfly Garden & Insectarium) and offered free admission to families with members who had been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders. Best-practice models for recreation and leisure encouraged offering choices, limiting stimuli and creating the mastery of smaller skills. The innovative educational workshops funded by the *Every Family Program* grant to implement specialized, intensive training of the educational staff relative to ASD protocols was designed by the Audubon Nature Institute in collaboration with the Tulane Center for Autism and Related Disorders, predicated upon previous research relative to engaging families with members who have been diagnosed as on the autistic spectrum disorder.

Methodology

The *Every Family Program* grant funding required the Audubon Nature Institute during the time frame of the grant to contract with an external evaluator to assess the content and adaptability of the *Every Family Program* and to observe and participate in the training of the educational staff to determine its effectiveness for engaging all members of participant families. The external evaluation for *Every Family Program* funded grant required the administration of a pre/posttest instrument to the selected Audubon Nature Institute education staff to assess their understanding and perceptions of ASD.

A pre/posttest evaluation instrument was developed with the external evaluator and education department directors. The questions examined education staff member's knowledge of ASD relative to their understanding of the unique nature of ASD and how it is manifested in sensory processing, aggression, repetitive behavior, and behavior management. The first portion of the pre-test requested demographic information from the participants and the second half of the instrument was a series of multiple-choice questions that had a response option, which varied between Very Knowledgeable to Somewhat Knowledgeable to Not Knowledgeable. The Director of Education Programs, Audubon Nature Institute, facilitated the administration of the pre/posttest. All pre/posttests were completed anonymously, and no personal identification was requested. All participants were informed in writing that if they did not wish to participate in the pre/posttests or declined to answer any question that they were free to do so.

The Audubon Nature Institute education staff participants' pre/posttest assessments were collected from two workshops:

- *Repetitive Behavior/Aggression/Sensory Processing* (February 3, 2016)
- *Problems with Sensory Systems/Behavior Management* (February 17, 2016)

The *Repetitive Behavior/Aggression/Sensory Processing Workshop 1* and the *Problems with Sensory Systems/Behavior Management Workshop 2* both focused

upon the complex issues and considerations in working with families with special learning needs (ASD) to enhance the knowledge base and skills of selected Audubon Nature Institute education staff in recognizing and learning the educational tools to engage with children who have been diagnosed with Autistic Spectrum Disorders.

Analysis of Data

Evidence based on the objective measures reported in the data analysis section has been collected to demonstrate how the *Every Family Program* related to best practices in ASD concepts and reached its stated goals and objectives related to the training of Audubon Nature Institute education staff relative to working with families whose members exhibit ASD.

Table 1 and Table 2 present a summary of the demographic data of the two (2) workshop participants

Table 1
Repetitive Behavior/Aggressions/Sensory Processing Workshop: Summary of Participants' Demographic Data (N=20)

Characteristics											
Age Range (25-56)	25	26	27	28	30	33	34	45	46	55	56
Respondents	1	2	2	5	2	1	2	2	1	1	1
Gender											
Male:	2										
Female:	18										
Education Degree Level											
Associate:	1										
B.A.:	7										
B.S.:	6										
M.S.:	6										
Ethnicity											
White/Non-Hispanic:	17										
African American:	2										
Latino:	1										
Years of Service at Audubon Nature Institute											
Range:	1-20 years										
Median:	2 years										

Table 2
Problems with Sensory Systems/Behavior Management Workshop. Summary of Participants' Demographic Data (N=16)

Characteristics	
Age Range (25-56)	
25	2
26	2
28	5
30	2
34	3
45	2
Gender	
Female:	14
Male:	2
Education Degree Level	
Associate:	1
B.A.:	4
B.S.:	7
M.S.:	4
Ethnicity	
White/Non-Hispanic:	12
African American:	2
Latino:	2
Years of Service at Audubon Institute	
Range:	1-7 years
Median:	2 years

The workshop pre/posttest instrument was designed to specifically assess the perceptions and opinions of the selected education staff participants at the conclusion of the two educational and interactive workshops. It was designed to collect data as to whether or not the Audubon Nature Center had met its expectations and to be utilized as a guide to determine particular aspects of the program that may need to be improved upon.

The collected responses clearly indicated a positive pattern of success for the project's goals and objectives. There was a strong correlation relative to the design of the curriculum modules and how they were integrated into the learning process. The participants rated each area on the posttest from Very Knowledgeable to Somewhat Knowledgeable and there is direct evidence that the success of the project was the result of its design, presentation, workshop

exercises, the inclusion of the Audubon Nature Center professional members and the Tulane Center for Autism and Related Disorders, as well as the desire of the participants to become involved in a new learning experience related to ASD. The data collected from these workshop pre/posttests instruments the results are found below in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3
Audubon Nature Institute Every Family Foundation Grant Repetitive Behavior/Aggression/Sensory Processing Workshop

Pre/Post Test Results (N=20)			
1.	Were the objectives of this Every Family Grant Workshop (Repetitive Behaviors/ Aggression/Sensory Processing) clear to you?		
	Pre-Test	Yes 90% (18)	No 10% (2)
	Post-Test	Yes 100% (20)	No 0%
2.	Prior to your participation in the Every Family Grant Workshop, which focuses upon the complex issues and considerations in working with families with special learning needs (Autism) were you knowledgeable about the Repetitive Behaviors associate with Autism Spectrum Disorders?		
	Very knowledgeable	0%	
	Somewhat knowledgeable	90% (18)	
	Not Knowledgeable	10% (2)	
3.	Now that you have completed this Every Family Grant Workshop, which focuses upon the complex issues and considerations in working with families with special learning needs (Autism), are you knowledgeable about the Repetitive Behaviors associated with Autism Spectrum?		
	Very knowledgeable	60% (12)	
	Somewhat knowledgeable	40% (8)	
	Not Knowledgeable	0%	

Table 4
Audubon Nature Institute Every Family Foundation Grant Repetitive Behavior/Aggression/Sensory Processing Workshop

Pre/Post Test Results (N=16)			
1.	Were the objectives of this Every Family Grant Workshop (Problems with Sensory Systems/Behavior Management/Behavior Management Techniques) clear to you?		
	Pre-Test	Yes 75% (12)	No 25% (4)
	Post-Test	Yes 93.75% (15)	No 6.25% (1)
2.	Prior to your participation in the Every Family Grant Workshop, which focuses upon the complex issues and considerations in working with families with special learning needs (Autism) were you knowledgeable about the seven (7) Sensory Systems and what role they play in the life of a child with Autism?		
	Very knowledgeable	0%	
	Somewhat knowledgeable	87.5% (14)	
	Not Knowledgeable	12.5% (2)	
3.	Now that you have participated in the Every Family Grant Workshop, which focuses upon the complex issues and considerations in working with families with special learning needs (Autism) were you knowledgeable about the seven (7) Sensory Systems and what role they play in the life of a child with Autism?		
	Very knowledgeable	56.2% (9)	
	Somewhat knowledgeable	43.75% (7)	
	Not Knowledgeable	0%	

The assessment of the data collected represented a compendium of all the responses from the pre/posttest instrument as completed by the twenty (20) education staff participants in the *Repetitive Behavior/Aggression/Sensory Processing* Workshop and a compilation of all the responses from the pre/posttest instrument as completed by the sixteen (16) education staff participants in the *Problems with Sensory Systems/Behavior Management* Workshop.

The *Repetitive Behavior/Aggression/Sensory Processing Workshop 1* and the *Problems with Sensory Systems/Behavior Management Workshop 2* both focused upon the complex issues and considerations in working with families with special learning needs (ASD) to enhance the knowledge-base and skills of selected Audubon Nature Institute education staff in recognizing and learning the educational tools to engage with children who have been diagnosed with Autistic Spectrum Disorders. The subsets of both workshops included an intense and interactive learning process, which included modules on the attributes and

characteristics of children with autism such as compulsive and ritualistic routines, insistence on sameness, verbal rituals, sensory system identifiers, common behavior problems, and behavior-management techniques. The workshop facilitator stressed how these characteristics and behaviors are manifested in children with ASD and what are the potential solutions available to the education staff as they engage actively within the Nature Institute's clientele to provide a viable learning experience for families with children who present ASD.

A review of the pre/posttest data from both workshops indicated that there was a distinctive variation from what the education staff knew about ASD prior to the workshop to an appreciable increase in their learning curve at the conclusion of each workshop. The data exhibit, in general, a significant range change from the indicators of Not Knowledgeable or Somewhat Knowledgeable in the pre-test to a range of Somewhat Knowledgeable to Very Knowledgeable in the posttest.

An analysis of the pre- and posttest instruments for both workshops Workshop 1(N=20) and Workshop 2 (N=16) to determine what type of learning was measured on a Likert scale ranging from "Very Knowledgeable " to "Not Knowledgeable") as a result of the participation in the *Every Family* project, the Audubon Nature Institute education staff indicated positive growth with becoming more familiar with new the ASD content materials as well as learning about innovative ways to use emergent research and strategies in working with children who exhibit ASD.

The *Every Family Program* expanded their knowledge of how to integrate interactive new learning and teaching techniques for working with children with autism. There was a preponderance of agreement on the part of the respondents that it increased to a great extent.

The data suggested that the level of satisfaction with the interactive workshops ranged from Excellent, to Very Good, to Good. Workshop 1 measured 45% (9) Excellent, 40% (8) Very Good, and 15% (3) Good, while Workshop 2 indicated a range of Excellent 62.5% (10), Very good 31.25% (5), and Good 6.25% (1). The agreement or disagreement of the orientation and learning modules conducted during the two workshops, the evaluation noted positive and strong agreement (90-100%). In terms of the experience of working with the workshop facilitator and the Audubon Nature Center education division team in answering questions and the opportunity to participate as a team member, agreement ranged from 37.5% Strongly Agree, to 62.5% Agree. Furthermore, they indicated a strong satisfaction response in having the opportunity to ask questions of the facilitator and the opportunity to interact and discuss issues with her.

An assessment of the data presented examined a more finite distribution by collecting workshop statistical data and a comparison drawn from the two workshops, indicating similar results as evidenced from both the pre and posttest data.

During April 2016 (April 4 & 7) twenty-eight (28) families from the New Orleans environs whose members exhibited autism spectrum disorders were invited to the Audubon Zoo to participate in a free *Sensory Sunda*y event with the Audubon Zoo trained education staff. Utilizing an online survey instrument designed and administered by the Audubon Nature Institute Education Projects Department, a quantitative/qualitative measure of these families' satisfaction/dissatisfaction was collected. The total N for the survey results was drawn from ten (10) families. The survey instrument assessed their opinions from seven (7) questions of which four (4) were quantifiable and two (2) were qualitative in nature.

The overall satisfaction with the Sensory Sunday demonstrated a high percentage of Very Satisfied 70% (7) to Somewhat Satisfied 30% (3). Question 6 matched this in that 80% (8) would be Extremely Likely to attend future special needs programs to 20% (2) who indicated Very Likely to attend future programs. Variances were noted in Question 2 and Question 3 in those families' opinions related to the zoo staff's willingness to help and the appropriateness of the Sensory Sunday activities. In each case, One (1) family or 10% stated that the zoo staff was Somewhat Helpful to another family (1) who acknowledged that the activities were Neither Appropriate nor Inappropriate. Overall for these two queries the rate of favorability was 90% (9) from Extremely Well to Very Well and Very Appropriate to Somewhat Appropriate. These data are summarized in Table 5 while the qualitative data are summarized in Table 6.

Table 5
Audubon Nature Institute Every Family Foundation Grant Repetitive Behavior/Aggression/Sensory Processing Workshop Survey
Total Number of Respondents (10)

Multiple Choice		
Q1. Overall, how satisfied/dissatisfied are you with the Sensory Sunday event?		
Very Satisfied	7	70.0%
Somewhat Satisfied	3	30.0%
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	0	0.0%
Somewhat Dissatisfied	0	0.0%
Very Dissatisfied	0	0.0%
Q2. Did you feel that the zoo staff was helpful and understood your needs?		
Extremely Well	5	50.0%
Very Well	4	40.0%
Somewhat	1	10.0%
Not so Well	0	0.0%
Q3. Did you feel that activities were appropriate for your family's special needs and interests?		
Very Appropriate	5	50.0%
Somewhat Appropriate	4	40.0%
Neither Appropriate nor Appropriate	1	10.0%
Somewhat Inappropriate	0	0.0%
Very Inappropriate	0	0.0%
Q6. How likely are you to attend future special needs programs at the Audubon Zoo?		
Extremely Likely	8	80.0%
Very Likely	2	20.0%
Somewhat Likely	0	0.0%
Not so Likely	0	0.0%
Not at all Likely	0	0.0%

Table 6
Audubon Nature Institute Every Family Foundation Grant Repetitive Behavior/Aggression/Sensory Processing Workshop
Total Number of Respondents (10)

Qualitative Responses

Q4. What did you like best about Sensory Sunday?

- Treat other children in the family to be a part of the special activities
- Entrance before zoo opened, fewer people, little noise. Our son has autism and he gets irritable and anxious in heat. It was the first time we have seen our son actually looked for animals and spent more time observing. The kids enjoyed watching the animals eat.
- I felt more at ease as a parent without the crowds of people during regular zoo hours. A big fear for me is getting separated from my special needs kids. They don't have the communication skills for an instance of separation
- The lack of crowds
- The touching of the items at the cart.
- Very nice to be able to view animals without the crowds and for the children to be able to have the room and time to enjoy making crafts and touching and learning of animal details with the staff.
- I like the fact that it was not over-crowded, my son was around peers
- Just to be amongst families who understand the struggles we face and not feeling judged.
- When we did talk to the staff they were friendly and knowledgeable.
- Great for families with special needs…thank you.
- It was a great experience. We are excited to come back next month. Thank you for giving our kids this time at the zoo.

Q5. What did you like least about Sensory Sunday?

- The arrival was rushed. Did not have the opportunity to address/welcome the group as a whole but rather a few at a time then the group spread out while waiting and the children were antsy because some families already went to see animals and were waiting
- The sensory activities were not much interest to our kids.
- I thought that it wasn't long enough. Once my daughter went through the sensory component she wasn't that interested in the Zoo. Maybe have a designated area for 15 minutes of "sensory touch" would be great.
- The walk from animal exhibit to the next was too fast. I brought my son to the rest room and when I got back they had already started and we were behind and I had to walk quickly with him to catch up and he doesn't walk very fast and isn't very stable on uneven ground. Wish we could have had more time in the zoo.
- The waiting to start the tour. Patience is not something my child is blessed with.
- It was extremely difficult for my son to participate in the art activity, as he was unable to reach. Although staff was polite and knowledgeable, few addressed the children.

Conclusions

An examination of the data from the pre/posttest evaluation clearly substantiated that the goals, objectives and activities had been very successfully met by the grantee, the Audubon Nature Institute. The actual immersion into the interactive and information-driven workshops and the introduction of the ASD content modules as well as the opportunity to work with the workshop facilitator emerged as highly beneficial. The education-staff participants expressed a high comfort level with the focus of the ASD project agenda and acknowledged that their personal interests and expectations were piqued. An analysis of the data indicated that a positive and enriching learning experience relative to the ASD learning modules, the ASD research content, and the collaboration with their colleagues and team building was accomplished.

The data collected from the online survey instrument distributed to families who participated in *Sensory Sunday* suggested that overall satisfaction was positive and that they would be extremely likely to attend future special-needs programs. The findings substantiated that the selected Audubon Nature Institute education staff's expectations of the learning modules were met in the following ways:

- Collected data indicated that there are beneficial outcomes for education staff in that the two ASD workshops provided not only a learning-based inquiry opportunity but a unique experience which resulted in motivation, excitement and team collaboration
- The pre-test/posttest evaluation results exhibited the importance of the two workshops in creating both a goal-oriented activity which facilitated collaboration as well as an opportunity for new mastery experiences with immediate live feedback and discussion with the workshop facilitator
- The workshops provided the opportunity for the selected education staff to become cognizant of cutting-edge knowledge for purposes of enhancing their content knowledge relative to Autistic Spectrum Disorders.
- The pilot program was of high quality and consistent with the goals and objectives stated in the grant
- The pedagogical and technical success of the *Every Family Program* workshops was directly attributed to the expertise and knowledge base of the facilitator and the Audubon Nature Institute's professional educators.

Overall, it appeared that the immersion of the Audubon Nature Center's education staff into the *Sensory Sunday* experience, as part of the *Every Family Program*, was not only beneficial to the students, family and community members but showed promise for more opportunities to enhance educational

opportunities in the community for children with autism. Educators may find it beneficial to build school, family and community partnerships to understand the needs of students with ASD, capitalize on their strengths, provide supports to address their challenges, and facilitate positive social relationships.

Developing programs and events in the community that are tailored to the needs of children with autism spectrum disorder can lead to an increase in learning for all members of the community. ***LEJ***

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Book Review

by Donna L. Knight

Defying Standardization: Creating Curriculum for an Uncertain Future

by Christopher H. Tienken, 2017. Lanham, Maryland, Rowman & Littlefield.
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The reform of education has reached new levels of resolve and accountability, and the constant demand to meet those measurements of success continue to add confusion and anxiety to educators struggling to meet the requirements of a limited and archaic mandated curriculum. Educational bureaucrats across the nation have created standardized curriculums intended to provide a cure for student weaknesses, and the "curricular outputs are sold to the American public as the only path to guaranteed academic achievement and global competitiveness" (Tienken, 2017, p. xiii). These bureaucratic mandates often result in the stifling of teacher individuality, where dictation decides what, when, and how a teacher leads his or her own classroom (Sergiovanni, 1992). The strengths and talents of the individual teacher have been replaced with a monotonous script of educational practices.

In *Defying Standardization* (2017), Christopher Tienken argues that, "the assumptions underlying the need to standardize curriculum expectations and the claims of the effectiveness of standardization are fatally flawed" (p. 7-8). The book forms an interesting analysis of various theories and philosophies associated with the mandates and adoptions of current standardized tests, and looks closely at bureaucratic policies and mandates, and the foundations behind their implementations.

The book is divided into two distinct parts. The first part looks at historical trends and directives that have led to the current curriculum standardization and the fevered race to prove our nation's superiority to the rest of the world. Tienken looks at the cost of standardization, not only in financial measures, but also in the quality of instruction found in a cacophony of mandates and limited use of creativity. His concerns look specifically at the narrowing impact of standardized testing on

leadership and instruction, and the pressure to make sure all content is covered in a quest to make sure students reach expectations - all centering on the worry of job security.

In addition, the first part of the book takes the reader on an interesting path down the road of economics and the false representation standardized tests have on the success – or lack of success – of the American people. Tienken points specifically to the falsely-presented painting of a society failing to match up to its world counterparts. He uses research data to debunk theories of American inadequacies, and its ability to compete in global economic change. Tienken references the words of John Dewey and the need for an egalitarian system which promotes equal access to educational support for all learners, a system that encourages "policies and practices that seek to develop a diversity of talents and value diversity as a positive attribute to be nurtured, not homogenized" (Tienken, 2017, p. 80). This first section of the book takes the reader on an in-depth tour of the standardization nonsense that is driving our nation's educational curriculum, and the fraudulent claims and comparisons being made to misinform a vulnerable society into thinking that America's education system is lacking in a competitive world market.

"Unrestrained individualism is consistent with democratic values since it will not guarantee others the realization of their potentialities" (Giles, McCutchen, & Zechiel, 1942, p. 10). The second part of the book argues that there is no evidence available that standardized curriculum is capable of producing superior academic results that correlate to any meaningful comparison measure, and it provides an evidence-based look into practical and historical foundations that support a much less standardized curriculum. In addition, Dewey is again referenced regarding the achievements of public educational systems, and the myth that a set curriculum will best meet the needs of demographically diverse student populations.

The book represents the educator and the lack of educator input used in the analysis and implementation of the "one size fits all" standardized testing measurements used in the United States. Tienken's text is an engaging and fast read, embedded with one interesting fact after another, as he looks at the research, philosophies and flaws of standardization, and the impact on the perceptions of our students and teachers, and the future of our economic status.

Defying Standardization takes the reader on an eye-opening journey through the myths and distortions of data used in an effort to promote an educational system built on a nonexistent monogamous population. It allows the reader to witness the reality of research and the power found in a true representation of our nation's leadership in creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship. *Defying Standardization* opens the doors to those willing to witness the true illustration

of our nation's success and the necessity for education to meet the diverse needs of its learners. This must-read text is applicable for all current and prospective educators, and for any bureaucrat or politician who proceeds to pontificate understandings based on archaic philosophies and theories, which do not take the individual and diverse needs of our students into consideration.

Personally, I began reflecting on my own classroom practices and frustrations with trying to meet the demands of a limited student curriculum and a narrow teacher evaluation system that no longer seems to hold the best interests of the child at the helm of its quest. As educators, we need to step back and take a serious look at the validity surrounding a standardized curriculum, and begin to recognize the individual strengths and gifts held in the souls and minds of the future of our nation – the children. ***LEJ***

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Ministry in the Classroom

by Kimberly Lavado

It might be just me. It usually is. You see I am continually caught off guard by folks being so enthusiastic about a presentation on diversity in the classroom. Don't get me wrong. I'm not caught off guard because I don't think it's important. I do. I lead one or two courses on teaching in diverse classrooms each semester for our undergraduates. I get how important it is for us to consider and plan for the diversity of students in our classrooms. I just am surprised when people express excitement over the topic as a sectional or conference offering because they often express how pertinent the subject is and how so many people don't realize the importance of it.

That is what truly catches me off guard. How can we not realize the importance of it on a daily basis? The word diversity conjures up a variety of emotions, images, and misconceptions for people. A few courses ago I had a classroom of students all of a similar skin tone. Someone made a joke about the irony of the subject and the demographic of the room. When we got to know each other better we discovered eight different ethnicities including a German-descended Native American, three different language backgrounds, and a host of variances among us that demonstrated the importance of understanding diversity as something far beyond skin tone and gender.

In that same semester I taught a second section of the course. If you glanced into the classroom through the window you would have seen a variety of skin tones and visible obvious differences. No one questioned the diversity in the room because the differences were visible. Therein lies the challenge. Understanding what diversity is means understanding that it is more than skin deep. It is simply not black and white.

Every individual exists as part of a group while at the same time possessing qualities and characteristics that differ from the group. One of my former students, a white female with a common German last name, attended Lutheran schools most of her life, but she also belonged to the Hispanic community and grew up bilingual. Her name and physical features belied a diverse background. Had I not taken the time to get to know her, I might never have learned about that background. Another student visited me after the semester was over to thank me for helping her to see the value in her ethnicity and experiences. She told me she had always viewed them as deficits to be overcome.

The bottom line is this: students' backgrounds and personal experiences matter to them and have an impact on how they learn. Being a teacher in ministry means we should get to know who our students are in order to help them learn most effectively. Taking the time to build relationships in our classrooms allows us to plan learning experiences that meet students' needs and it communicates the value that they have for us and, by extension, the value that they have in God's eyes. By taking the time to foster relationships with our students we actually become multicultural educators because we design lessons with our students and their interests in mind. We don't teach the subject content with one approach. We want to engage our students, so we engage them in ways they best learn and in ways that make sense to them. The only way to do that well is to foster relationships - meaningful relationships - that communicate care and demonstrate love. After all, isn't that what being the hands and feet of God in ministry really is? ***LEJ***

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Words for Thought

by Amy Stradtmann

We Skip the Easy Stuff

In my years supervising teachers as an administrator, and now as I am working with pre-service teacher candidates, I have noticed a common thread. We tend to skip the easy stuff. In an effort to get to the meat of a lesson, we skip one of the most necessary steps for comprehension - activating and developing background knowledge.

Why? Is it because developing our students' background knowledge seems to be too easy? Is it because we assume that our audience already has the same life experiences and knowledge that we ourselves have? Is it because we are in a hurry to get to the content and skills that we must teach? Whatever our reasons for skipping this vital step, we must recognize that doing so has a significant impact on students' learning. Robert Marzano (2004) argued that what students already know about the content is one of the strongest indicators of how well they will learn new information relative to the content.

Students, whether they are elementary-school students, university seniors, or graduate students, walk into our classroom with varied experiences, and they bring their own interpretations of those experiences. How can we connect students to new learning if we do not take the time to inventory (and possibly correct) what they already think they know? It is our job to assist the learner in accessing their mental file so that they can use it and add new material to it. In doing so, students are better equipped to connect with the text, learn new vocabulary, make inferences, read fluently, and recall information. Additionally, we model solid teaching practice to them so that they will transfer that practice into their own future classrooms.

So next time you implement a lesson, take time to massage the brain to prepare it for new learning. Engage the students with things they know to enhance their ability to learn and grow. Remember the critical importance of "the easy stuff!" ***LEJ***

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The Last Word
by Erik Ankerberg

Be Opened

Then, looking up to heaven, He sighed, and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened."

– Mark 7:34 NKJV

The story never gets old to me--a group of friends bring one of their own, a man who cannot hear or speak, to Jesus. Our Lord touches his tongue and his ears and commands that they be opened. The results? His ears are opened, his tongue is unchained, and the man speaks plainly. A man who came to Jesus broken left restored and made whole. Thanks to Jesus, this man has a completely new life in front of him.

As I write today, we are just a few weeks into a new academic year at Concordia University Chicago. Yes, a new year has begun, but perhaps the excitement that accompanies this new beginning has already begun to wear off. The start of the year offers such promise, but the realities of life can degrade our optimism. We have carefully planned our classes; we have brought our best intentions and our best professional selves to our work. Yet, just days into a new year, we may wonder whether those efforts are enough.

We see students, full of optimism as the school year begins, who falter along the way and struggle to find academic success. Many families strive valiantly to offer their children support, but face difficult obstacles. Our colleagues bring their expertise and professionalism to the classroom, but their challenges and frustrations follow them there, as well.

Our schools, like our homes, are places that offer hope for the challenges we face in life. Our Lord, through the work of the Holy Spirit, opens schools that offer a transformational education that is grounded in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and him crucified. In the context of our schools, he opens the ears of our students, their families, and our colleagues, and fills those ears with the one thing needful--the assurance of his restoring love.

This edition of Lutheran Education continues the journal's long-standing commitment to sharing ways in which our ears are opened. Whether it is developing forms of mentoring, encouraging struggling readers, or developing new forms of

curricula, this edition highlights many examples of colleagues carrying out the good work of placing hope and encouragement in the ears of students, families, and professional educators.

As we begin another year of partnering together, across educational institutions at all levels, my prayer is that we actively seek out and promote those opportunities in our schools, where the Lord of the Church can open our ears to hear the good news of our work together to serve young people and transform their lives, as well as the Good News of God's work to serve us and bring us home to himself in eternity.

Have a most blessed and wonderful year. ***LEJ***

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